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S A DEAN MAN
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FOR 2004
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THE
EDISTRICTING
WARS
Sasha Abramsky

HILIP GUSTON,
HE ABSTRACT
MPRESSIONIST
Arthur C. Danto

WOMEN UNDER SIEGE

FEARS GROW, HOPES DIM, IN OCCUPIED IRAQ

by LAUREN SANDLER

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LETTERS

R.O. BLECHMAN

UNWILLINGLY WED TO THE WAR

O'Fallon, Ill.

■ In the six years I've been a military wife and a *Nation* reader (introduced to it by my Army officer husband), I've seen my viewpoints reflected in your pages but not my life. Karen Houppert's excellent "Against the War but Married to It" [Nov. 10] remedied that. My husband deployed for six months following 9/11, leaving me alone with our two small children, scrambling to explain to them, and myself, why he was gone. If I squinted hard, skipped past Alexander Cockburn's columns and deleted my ZNet e-mail before reading it, I could almost see the justification for the invasion of Afghanistan. It wasn't how I thought Bush should have responded to 9/11, but the fact that the invasion had support even on the left made it a little easier to convince myself that it served a greater good. I've told my husband it's a good thing he has not (yet) been deployed to Iraq, since I can't see managing to perform the same hat trick on myself this time around. MARIANNE SHELDON

Pensacola, Fla.

■ My husband is currently in Iraq on a twelve-month mission. As a "waiting wife" I thank Karen Houppert for her article. It couldn't be more representative of the way I feel, especially about having to withhold my opinions—wanting to become more active in the antiwar movement but not being able to as it would risk my husband's rank. To hear about other wives who feel the same way gives me a tremendous feeling that I am not alone. Thank you. J.W.

TIME SERVED, TIME TO MOVE ON

New York City

■ Rebecca Perl's important "The Last Disenfranchised Class" [Nov. 24], about voting rights for ex-felons, liberally quotes former prisoner Jan Warren. Warren is now doing good works for formerly incarcerated people as associate director of the College and Community Fellowship at the Center for the Study of Women in Society, Graduate Center, CUNY. Our mission is to eliminate the barriers to education and civic participation of formerly incarcerated women and their families by supporting ex-offenders in their pursuit of higher education and by encouraging their leadership in change-oriented criminal justice movements. To date, fifty-eight women have received aid and mentoring through CCF. Fifteen have received degrees and forty-seven remain active. Two are in doctoral programs, and fifteen are pursuing master's degrees. Surely, such women, and others, deserve the right to vote. BARBARA MARTINSONS

College and Community Fellowship

Arlington, Va.

■ Your cover story on felon disenfranchisement misses a technical detail. People in prison cannot vote, but they still count for purposes of political apportionment. Peter Wagner's review of New York (www.prisonersofthecensus.org) reveals ten State Assembly districts with 2–5 percent of the population in prison. My quick analysis of Texas shows that approximately 12 percent of the population of House District 13 lives behind bars and is prohibited from voting for or against the person who nominally represents them in the state legislature. Thus, prisons do more than just lock (too many) people up. They transfer voting power from urban, minority, typically Democratic districts to rural districts with very different characteristics. The s implest solution is for the Census to allow people in prison to provide their "usual residence" rather than assign them the institution's address. ERIC LOTKE

Washington, DC

■ Felons who have served their sentence are not the "last disenfranchised class." Citizens of the nation's capital have been disenfranchised since 1801. They do not have voting rights in the Senate or House, yet they have served in every war since the Revolution, on juries and pay federal and state taxes. Isn't it time to end disenfranchisement in the nation's capital, too? Visit www.letsfreedc.org. MARK DAVID RICHARDS

KILLING THE YOUNG

Hopkins, Minn.

■ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, in her article on juveniles and the death penalty in Virginia ["A Killing Tradition," Nov. 17], notes that 16-year-old Virginia Christian was executed the day after she turned 17. Amnesty International's *A Punishment in Search of a Crime* notes that 14-year-old George Stinney Jr. was put to death in South Carolina in 1944. And as I recall, the "liberal" Commonwealth of Massachusetts sent a 16-year-old to his death in the late 1940s for murder, while the US High Commissioner of Germany at almost the same time commuted the death sentence of a 17-year-old soldier, saying he was too young. KENNETH S. SACHS

MEDIA JUSTICE: WERE HERE, ARE HERE

San Francisco

■ I found it curious that Makani Themba-Nixon and Nan Rubin state that the "media justice movement had a coming-out party" in August 2002 ["Speaking for Ourselves," Nov. 17]. Media justice has a long and integral history among independent media arts organizations. A few examples: Filmmakers created Third World Newsreel in the 1960s, Scribe Video Center and National Asian American Telecommunications Association in the 1970s, Paper Tiger and Deep Dish TV in the 1980s and the Independent Television Service in the 1990s. National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture's member organizations have worked for decades to effect media-related change on local, regional and national levels—advocating for diversity and community-based perspectives; creating alternative exhibition, distribution and broadcast outlets; demanding access for all citizens to the making of media; and developing innovative production programs for youth and emerging producers.

I wouldn't want *Nation* readers to think this movement was born with the Independent Media Centers in 1999; organizations deeply rooted in their communities have been and will continue to work for "independent ways to tell our stories" (www.namac.org).

HELEN DE MICHIEL

National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture

Brooklyn, NY

■ Poor people have been leaders in the media justice movement. Since the mid-1980s organizations like the National Union of the Homeless and, later, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union have been creating their own media to raise awareness of growing poverty in America and document the creative actions of a movement to end poverty, led by the poor. We developed a grassroots media strategy that includes an award-winning website (www.kwru.org), the media linchpin of a growing national network of poor people's organizations called the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign. In 1999 I founded Human Rights Tech to share the lessons we learned and to help groups (including the Coalition of Immokalee Workers) build their own media organizing infrastructure. Poor people's groups have been making alliances and have organized a series of Break the Media Blackout Conferences dating back over twelve years. The broader media justice movement can learn from these pioneers. CHRIS CARUSO

Human Rights Tech

KVELL & KVETCH

Jews, gentiles, gays, straights and others wrote in to vent their ire or sing the praises of "Oy Gay!" Kera Bolonik's November 17 review of the TV sitcom Will & Grace. *Some readers found* W&G *"mundane, trite, trivial and downright dull," "a white, middle-class (yuppie) show," and Danny Scott of Louisville, Kentucky, opined of the review, "not since Bush was flown onto the deck of the Abraham Lincoln have I observed such a blatant attempt to latch onto*

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EDITORIALS

The Spirit of Geneva

The launching of a new Middle East peace plan in Switzerland in early December attracted more than the usual number of luminaries. Former President Jimmy Carter attended the ceremony to offer passionate support for the so-called Geneva Accord, and a host of former and current diplomats, including UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela, added their backing as well. The star power in attendance was a testament to the ambitious scope of this new proposal, and it reflected as well growing frustration with the seemingly directionless "road map."

The Geneva Accord, engineered by former Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and former Palestinian Authority negotiator Yasir Abed-Rabbo, is a detailed blueprint for a resolution to the conflict. It seeks to overcome the chief defect of the Oslo process and the road map by settling the most difficult issues right away, rather than putting them off to "final status" talks. Thus it calls for a two-state solution based on near-total Israeli withdrawal from the territories, a division of Jerusalem and the resettlement of most refugees in the new Palestinian state. The agreement also calls for an international force to guarantee implementation and oversight.

The media flurry and high-level maneuvering surrounding the accord may seem odd for what is, after all, merely a "virtual" agreement, signed by ousted politicians with little popular support. But it must be seen in the context of a conflict that has exhausted both sides. After three debilitating years of violence, a spirit of hopelessness has seemed all-pervasive. George W. Bush vowed last June that he would "ride herd" on both parties to make sure they adhered to the road map. Instead, he did next to nothing. Ariel Sharon has refused to halt settlement activity, assassinations or construction of the so-called separation wall, which, according to UN projections, will illegally annex up to 15 percent of Palestinian territory and in effect imprison hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. By August, the Islamists ended their cease-fire with the resumption of suicide bombings.

And yet, even as there seemed to be no exit from the endless conflict, there were fresh stirrings of dissent within Israel, and not all of them from the peace camp. In September a group of Israeli Air Force pilots announced that they would no longer participate in the assassinations in the territories. Moshe Ya'alon, the army chief of staff—the same man who last year declared that Israel should "sear deep into the consciousness of Palestinians that they are a defeated people"—said that Israel's repressive policies (which the United States is now consciously emulating in Iraq) "are working against our strategic interests."

Soon afterward, four former heads of Israel's General Security Service, or Shabak, representing among them almost two decades of leading the country's most feared and ruthless apparatus of counterterrorism and repression, publicly criticized the direction of government leadership in harsh, almost apocalyptic terms. One of them, Ami Ayalon, said, "We are taking very sure and measured steps to a point where the State of Israel will not be a democracy or a home for the Jewish people." Carmi Gillon added, "It is clear to me that we are heading for a crash." These voices have buttressed the left's warning that under Sharon, Israel is committing moral and economic suicide by pursuing an ultra-Zionist dream of conquering the West Bank, and that in the process it is destroying the more moderate Zionist vision of a secure homeland for the Jewish people.

Many commentators have raised serious and legitimate questions about various aspects of the Geneva Accord, including the

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cramped sovereignty granted to the new Palestinian state, its rejection of the full right of return for refugees and the fact that it fails to address water rights—a crucial issue in this arid region. Such criticism is to be expected, and is indeed healthy, given that the initiative tries to solve once and for all issues that have bedeviled politicians for more than five decades. But more important than any particular detail is that the Geneva Accord exposes Sharon's spurious claim that "there's no one to talk to," and it recognizes what Sharon and his allies have not: that there is no military solution to this conflict and that the only sane option is direct negotiation between the parties, with the encouragement and active participation of civil society. The Geneva Accord—like the "People's Voice" initiative by Ami Ayalon and Palestinian academic Sari Nusseibeh, which also calls for a two-state solution based on Israeli withdrawal from the territories and which has so far gathered more than 185,000 signatures of support—is a novel campaign to stimulate public pressure on dysfunctional leaders (indeed, Sharon's approval ratings have recently plummeted).

This last point is the most encouraging element of these initiatives, and the call for action is echoing around the world. In Israel, some 100,000 attended a peace demonstration in November. In the United States, mainstream religious groups, Jewish peace activists and the Palestine solidarity movement are working to counter the malign influence of AIPAC and the Christian evangelicals who have embraced Greater Israel extremism. A Senate resolution urging the Administration to promote the Geneva Accord and the People's Voice was supported by Dianne Feinstein, Patrick Leahy and John McCain, among others, by press time.

The Geneva Accord and other recent developments reflect a pragmatic awakening of Israel's conscience. But the Israeli left is too isolated, and the Palestinian population is too fractured and decimated, to force their leaders to resolve the conflict. They desperately need help from the outside world, in particular the United States, and yet never has Washington been more obstructionist. As the 2004 election approaches, Bush will be inclined to avoid taking serious risks to resolve the conflict. Only a powerful grassroots movement here in America, acting with others around the world and spurring positive action in Congress, will move Washington in a constructive direction.

A Win for Campaign Reform

In a 5-to-4 decision as we went to press, the Supreme Court upheld nearly all the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act's provisions. It would have been a major setback if the Court hadn't agreed with the law's banning of national party soft money and restrictions on electioneering ads. However, with 95 percent of Americans not giving any money and the bulk coming in $2,000 checks from a tiny, wealthy elite, big money still dominates the electoral process. Candidates and communities without access to wealth are still essentially excluded from meaningful participation. Exhibit A: Bush's Rangers and Pioneers. More reform is needed.

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COMMENT

Gore's a Dean Man Now

ELECTION MATTERS

Al Gore endorsed Howard Dean for President for the same reason that so many other Democrats have: He wanted to be where the action is in his party. The man who while carrying the Democratic banner in 2000 won the most votes for President said as much when he announced his decision at a Harlem event, declaring, "Howard Dean really is the only candidate who has been able to inspire at the grassroots level all over this country the kind of passion and enthusiasm for democracy and change and transformation of America that we need in this country. We need to remake the Democratic Party, we need to remake America, we need to take it back on behalf of the people of this country."

The former Vice President went on to chide other candidates for piling on Dean in increasingly desperate attempts to stall the momentum of a candidate who, polls suggest, is positioned to sweep not just the first primary state of New Hampshire but the critical contests that follow in the late winter dash for delegates. But Gore actually did a little piling on of his own. That remark about Dean being the "only candidate" able to inspire passion cut to the heart of what ails the candidacies of Joe Lieberman, John Kerry and Dick Gephardt—with whom Gore has longer and better relations than with the former Vermont governor, who made noises about opposing him for the 2000 nomination.

Those other candidates, and their amen corner in a Washington press corps that still can't quite accept that the Dean insurgency is for real, struggled mightily to come up with a spin that would allow them to dismiss the Gore intervention. But their attempts to reduce his decision to crass calculation missed the fact that Dean and Gore have been talking, and finding common ground, for months. Perhaps there is some truth to the claim that Gore's move is calculated to improve his standing with the party cadres that adore Dean in order to position himself for a 2008 race, or even that he is intriguing against Bill and Hillary Clinton's none-too-subtle encouragement of retired Gen. Wesley Clark's candidacy. But the word among former aides who remain close to Gore is that the nation's "geek in chief" believes, as many veteran Democrats do, that the Dean camp is securing the party's future by harnessing the power of the Internet and other new technologies for political good. Gore is still dazzled by the fact that MoveOn.org events in which he has participated in recent months have drawn huge and enthusiastic crowds on short notice, and he is convinced the tech-savvy Dean campaign has the potential to translate the MoveOn magic into a November 2004 force to be reckoned with.

And Gore, openly critical of advisers who counseled ideological and stylistic caution in 2000, is now closer to Dean on the issues than the talking heads recognize. The former Veep's public criticisms of the war on Iraq, the Patriot Act and the Bush Administration's economic policies match the tone and content of Dean's campaign far more than they do those of Lieberman or Gephardt.

But isn't Gore just a blast from the party's best-forgotten past, a sour SoreLoserman for Bill O'Reilly to kick around? That may be how Washington sees it, but Dean has been around the country enough to know that Gore is still greeted with rock concert roars at state Democratic conventions and Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners. Gore's backing in Iowa, where he beat Bill Bradley 2 to 1 in the 2000 caucuses, could tip the state to Dean, who's now in a tight contest there with Gephardt. And in early-primary states with substantial African-American populations, such as South Carolina and Michigan, Dean gains from association with a man who is seen by black voters as having been robbed of the presidency when the Supreme Court blocked the Florida recount. Gore is well aware that the Vermonter's biggest applause line is a promise that "this time the person with the most votes is going to the White House."

Other candidates may talk about putting the 2000 race behind the party, but Dean continues to surf the anger over Florida better than any candidate except Al Sharpton. No coincidence, then, that Gore announced his support for Dean on December 9, the third anniversary of the day the Supreme Court halted the final recount. It is fair to argue that if nominated, Dean will have to move beyond visceral anger at how Bush became President and what he's done with the office. But as he moves to secure the nomination, that anger remains a big part of his appeal to Democrats. Just ask Al Gore.

JOHN NICHOLS

Steeling for 2004

If only handling Iraq were this easy: On December 4, fifteen months ahead of schedule, the Bush Administration dropped the tariffs it imposed on steel imports in March 2002. The official reason was that they were a great success; few people outside the Administration buy that argument. The real reason, almost everyone agrees, was that the World Trade Organization had ruled the tariffs illegal, and the European Union and other countries were about to impose retaliatory tariffs on US exports, which they were authorized to do under WTO rules. The unilateralist regime had met its match, at least on one issue.

The initial justification for the tariffs was as specious as the justification for their removal. Bush & Co. argued that the US steel industry was being victimized by a surge in cheap imports, which were driving prices down so far that domestic mills couldn't compete. In fact, the decline of the steel industry is a complex, multi-decade story and is hardly the product of a single import surge. Though it's impossible to read their crimped, mean little minds, it's almost certain the real reason is that Administration strategists had hoped to pick up enough votes in steel-producing states to swing some electoral votes into the Republican column in 2004.

It's hard to view the tariffs as a success by any measure. Restricting imports did raise the price of domestic steel, but this hurt steel-using industries like autos and appliances. The rate of job loss in steel did slow: In the twenty months before the imposition of the tariffs, employment in what the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls iron and steel mills and ferroalloy production fell by 20.7 percent, compared with a decline of 9.5 percent in the twenty months following. But this improvement was far less impressive than what was seen in the broad economy; employment fell by 1 percent in the first period, and 0.3 percent in the second. So employment shrinkage in steel went from a rate twenty times that in overall employment to one thirty-two times as great—and remained deeply

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COMMENT

negative. And the move only compounded the hostility foreigners felt at the highhandedness of the Bush Administration.

Of course, failure and foreign hostility haven't compelled the Administration to reverse its policies on war or global warming. Why the reversal on steel? For one thing, the EU crafted its retaliation very cleverly; it was days away from imposing tariffs on oranges (produced in Florida) and textiles (produced in other crucial Southern states). For another, damage to steel-using industries threatened electoral losses in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin that could have more than offset gains in steel-producing states like Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. And for yet another, big business in general abhors protectionism (though industrialists will frequently make exceptions for their own industries). So hostile was the opposition of business free-traders that the *Wall Street Journal* opened its editorial page, that epicenter of the vast right-wing conspiracy, to a column by a French critic of the Administration, EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy, who lamented the precedent set by the United States as one that might be adopted by other countries.

There's a lesson here for progressive critics of the WTO. Whatever its flaws, such as secrecy and the privileging of free trade over all else, there is some value to a rule-based multilateral organization designed to regulate international commerce. In criticizing the WTO's encroachments on our "sovereignty" (as Dick Gephardt did when he described the President as "back[ing] down to foreign pressure"), do we really want to offer any protective cover for the Bush gang's worst America-first instincts? DOUG HENWOOD

Doug Henwood, a Nation *contributing editor, is editor of* Left Business Observer. *His latest book is* After the New Economy *(New Press).*

Rosenbaum Inquisition

In 2002, Republicans on a House Judiciary subcommittee trained their sights on an unlikely target: conservative Judge James Rosenbaum, Chief Judge of the US District Court for the Minnesota District. The attack turns out to have been the opening salvo of a coordinated campaign by conservative Republicans, including Attorney General John Ashcroft and House majority leader Tom DeLay, to promote stricter criminal penalties for federal crimes and to consolidate power in the Justice Department's headquarters at the expense of judges and prosecutors in the field.

Rosenbaum appeared before a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee on May 14, 2002. A Reagan appointee with a reputation as a tough sentencer, he nonetheless spoke in favor of a Sentencing Commission proposal to slightly reduce the guideline sentences for low-level drug defendants. Republicans on the subcommittee were pushing legislation that, had it passed, would have overridden the commission. Rosenbaum told the subcommittee

In Fact . . .

PUFFIN/*NATION* PRIZE

■ The winner of the third annual Puffin/*Nation* Prize for Creative Citizenship is David Protess, professor at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. Protess founded the Innocence Project, which enlists journalism students, journalists, lawyers and private investigators to investigate questionable convictions for capital and other crimes. Over the past twelve years the Innocence Project was responsible for overturning the convictions of eight Illinois prisoners, four on death row. Former Illinois Governor George Ryan recognized the work of the project as being instrumental in his decision to suspend executions and grant clemency to every prisoner on death row. Protess is now engaged in setting up a program to help exonerated prisoners adjust to civilian life. The Puffin/*Nation* Prize, which carries a stipend of $100,000, is presented annually to an American citizen who has challenged the status quo "through distinctive, courageous, imaginative, socially responsible work of significance." Funding for the prize comes from the Puffin Foundation; it is administered by the Nation Institute. The winners are chosen by four judges, who remain anonymous.

PAUL SIMON

■ John Nichols writes: Paul Simon, who died unexpectedly on December 9 at 75, was elected to the Senate as an unapologetic liberal in the same year that Ronald Reagan won his landslide "morning in America" re-election. Even as Reagan was carrying Illinois in that 1984 election, the crusading newspaper editor turned crusading candidate easily beat a three-term Republican incumbent. Against Reagan's "government is the problem" rhetoric, Simon said, "Government is not the enemy." Against the lie of Reaganomics, Simon said it was right, and necessary, to raise taxes. Against the corruptions of empire and politics, Simon said it was time for an ethics revolution: cracking down on Iran/*contra* conspirators, forcing special-interest money out of campaigns, reasserting the regulatory role of federal agencies gutted during the Reagan years. Simon's style was so distinct that many Democrats encouraged the bow-tie-wearing senator to seek the presidency in 1988. After Dick Gephardt beat him in Iowa, Simon settled back as the Senate's liberal conscience until his retirement in 1997. He didn't really retire, however. The small-town journalist contributed to *The Nation* ("Social Security Fixes," April 29, 2002) and other publications and penned a stack of books. He was director of the Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University and co-chaired the Illinois commission that prodded Governor George Ryan to empty that state's death row. And he continually urged the Democratic Party to offer an aggressive liberal alternative to George W. Bush's Republicans (from his hospital bed, he endorsed Howard Dean). Reminded that polling data didn't always support liberal positions, Simon said, "What we need is more and more public officials who don't follow the polls." As usual, he meant it.

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that the proposed bill "confuses office boys and assembly-line workers with chairmen of the board."

A week later he received a letter framed as a discovery request and demanding further information on court cases he had cited. Several months later the subcommittee produced a bound report featuring twenty-two pages of allegations against Judge Rosenbaum. The Judiciary Committee is chaired by Wisconsin Republican F. James Sensenbrenner Jr., perhaps best known for his speech making the House case for the impeachment of President Clinton. The subcommittee's chief counsel and the muscle on the Rosenbaum matter is former Ken Starr deputy Jay Apperson.

Committee member Robert Scott, a Virginia Democrat, says he hasn't seen anything like the attack on Rosenbaum in eleven years in Congress. "I don't see how you can interpret it as anything other than an attempt to intimidate anyone who seeks to testify against a bill supported by the majority on the committee," says Scott.

The sentencing guidelines, mandated by legislation passed in 1984, have not been popular with judges. Updated guidelines are published annually in a document the size of a small telephone book. They specify a baseline sentence for a given offense and then in excruciating detail provide a formula for adjusting the sentence up or down based on factors like the defendant's record, "remorse" and degree and nature of involvement. The last step for the judge is to run a finger across a table on the last page, to a column that yields a result, expressed in months. A downward departure is permitted if the judge believes circumstances take the case out of the "heartland" of the offense or, more commonly, if the prosecution requests it in exchange for "substantial assistance," i.e., snitching. (An Ashcroft directive in September, while it required federal prosecutors to back off on plea bargaining, specifically allowed the substantial-cooperation deals to continue.)

In his testimony, Rosenbaum mentioned the prison time that his examples would have been given according to the guidelines, without noting that the actual sentences they received had been reduced by departures—and on that basis he is accused of misleading the subcommittee. His defenders say his point was that strict guidelines make departures necessary. The committee also dredged up a transcript of a sentencing hearing at which Judge Rosenbaum reduced a defendant's guideline sentence from ten years and one month to an even ten years, and then told him this sentence was "illegal." Rosenbaum's attorney says that was shorthand to explain to an uneducated kid that he was getting a departure and therefore his sentence was subject to prosecution appeal.

A Judiciary Committee source, speaking anonymously, noted that lying to a public official is a crime but added that should not be construed to mean a criminal charge was in the offing. A second possibility is an impeachment attempt, but that could backfire, given the support Rosenbaum has garnered from the media and a wide spectrum of the judiciary, notably Chief Justice William Rehnquist. There's been no reported movement on the case since this past summer, when a magistrate was dispatched to Minnesota to go over Rosenbaum's sentencing records going back to 1999.

Initially the subcommittee tried to enlist the General Accounting Office to look into Rosenbaum's sentencing habits. The GAO balked, replying with the bureaucratic equivalent of "we don't do witch hunts." Instead it agreed to study the incidence of departures in federal drug sentences nationwide, with the Eighth Circuit, where Minnesota lies, as a baseline. The findings, released in October, confirmed what everyone knew: that most downward departures were due to prosecutors' substantial-assistance motions, and they failed to show anything remarkable about departure rates for either the Eighth Circuit or the Minnesota District.

Meanwhile, Apperson had been helping draft the so-called Feeney amendment to the Amber Alert bill, signed into law in April. The amendment contains provisions that weaken a judge's discretion to depart from the guidelines. Then, in July, conservative Republicans announced the formation of a House Working Group on Judicial Accountability. Its members include DeLay, who proclaimed the working group would "take no prisoners" when it came to abuse of judicial discretion. The campaign gathered more steam in August, when Ashcroft ordered federal attorneys nationwide to report departures to the Justice Department, a directive that Senator Edward Kennedy characterized as enlisting them in "the establishment of a blacklist." In September, Ashcroft issued his order for prosecutors to curtail plea bargaining and "pursue the most serious, readily provable offenses that are supported by the facts."

Taken as a whole, the campaign should insure that the spectacular US incarceration rate, the highest in the world, will continue in a healthy growth pattern for the foreseeable future.

DAVID RUBENSTEIN

David Rubenstein is a writer living in Minneapolis.

CALVIN TRILLIN

WHAT TOM DELAY MIGHT HAVE HAD IN MIND WHEN HE HATCHED THE COCKAMAMIE AND SHORT-LIVED SCHEME TO USE A CRUISE SHIP IN NEW YORK HARBOR DURING THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

"A cruise ship in the harbor," thought DeLay,
"Could be a place where decent folks would stay,
Avoiding all that mob that we detest—
New Yorkers, who are foreigners at best.
We'd still get pictures showing Bush as hero
While speaking resolutely at Ground Zero.
A pity it's to Sodom we must drag
Our George to get him wrapped up in the flag."

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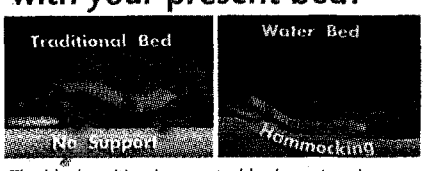

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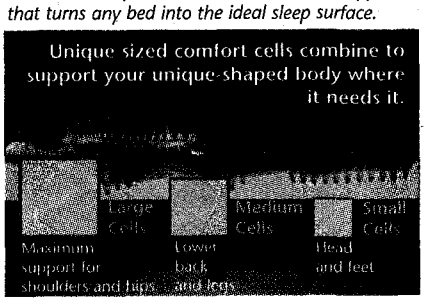
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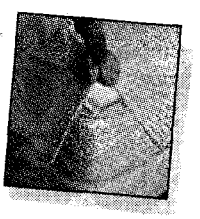

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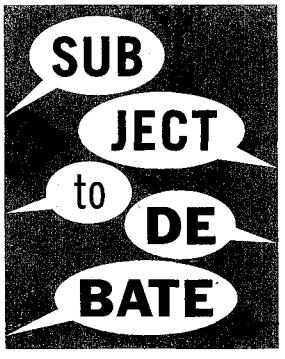
KATHA POLLITT

Who Needs Christmas? They Do!



When did Christmas shopping become a patriotic duty, the contemporary equivalent of collecting tin cans in World War II? 9/11 is partly to blame—remember when Bush told Americans to do their bit for the nation by going shopping? But the big reason, of course, is the economy. The media pores over the mall receipts for Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, the way Roman augurs inspected the entrails of pigeons: Will America have the "consumer confidence" to spend its way into prosperity? Nobody's talking about putting the Christ back in Christmas anymore, and no wonder. Christ was a notorious cheapskate and do-it-yourselfer—his idea of a present was to give you some wine he'd made out of water. What would happen to the liquor industry (which does $3.7 billion in business during the holiday season) if everybody started doing that?

Isn't there a better way to run the economy than by hectoring people into buying expensive, unnecessary items in order to exchange them with others who have done exactly the same thing? I don't know about you, but my closet is full of clothes, my shelves groan with unread books and unwrapped CDs, and I don't want any more electronic devices—I am still trying to program the clock in the no-longer-functional microwave, a pointless appliance if ever there was one. You can reheat Chinese food perfectly well on the stove. I wouldn't say no to a very young kitten, all gray with no stripes, but that is the sort of present that finds you.

Wouldn't it make more sense, I am trying to say, to pay directly for the social goods consumer spending is theoretically supposed to produce? Instead of buying more sweaters individually, in the hope that somewhere down the line jobs are created, housing is built, property taxes are paid and eventually a school gets money for new library books, why not skip the sweater and buy the books, right now, while the kids are still alive? If consumerism was the way to pay for our communal needs—education, healthcare, affordable housing, clean air, not to mention truth, justice, equality and beauty—we would surely have those things by now. Instead, we have tax cuts for the rich and Wal-Marts for the rest of us.

Fortunately, there are other ways to spend those holiday dollars, especially now that web-based organizations like MoveOn.org, and the Democratic presidential candidates' websites, make donating as easy as impulse shopping. Here are a few small-scale, low-to-no-overhead projects that could do a lot with a little:

Remember Afghan women? Depending on who's talking, they are making progress, standing still or losing ground, but no one disputes that they are in dire need of education, work, human rights and healthcare: Afghanistan has among the highest maternal mortality rates and lowest female literacy rates in the world. Fahima Vorgetts, a Maryland-based Afghan refugee who is on the board of Women for Afghan Women, is the guiding spirit behind HAWCA and HOOWA, nonprofits focused on giving Afghan women the education—basic, advanced and vocational—that they need to become self-sufficient. Among Vorgetts's projects are a school in Kandahar and one in Peshawar for refugees; literacy, computer, sewing and embroidery classes; dairy and poultry projects for rural widows; and material aid for returning refugees. Send your check—which will go a long way in Afghanistan, where a family can live for a week for the price of a pizza—to Women for Afghan Women/Afghan Women's Fund, 55 Maryland Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21401.

Remember New York City? After 9/11, all kinds of wonderful things were supposed to happen, but two years later the city is still stressed out and struggling. Next time you're on the Internet, go to www.donorschoose.org and browse among proposals from classroom teachers, almost all based in poor schools serving minority students, and contribute to whichever one appeals to you. You can fund a classroom library for first graders in Staten Island; support a champion chess team in the Bronx; give each teen in a Brooklyn history class a review book for the Regents test. You won't only be helping some of the most underserved children in the country, you'll be supporting their teachers, too.

Remember Africa? In Kenya and Tanzania high school tuition is more than some families earn in a year, and parents often prefer to educate sons. The Canadian Harambee Education Society, a secular humanist project, pays tuition for poor girls who have done well on the entrance exams and provides the help they need to succeed in school. The organization's slogan, "We can't do everything...but we can do something!" is apparently quite a motivator: In 1985 they underwrote twenty-five students; last year it was nearly 400. You can fund one girl's education for $400 Canadian or $305 US, but any amount will be gratefully accepted. Send checks to CHES, 446 Kelley Street, New Westminster, BC V3L3T9, Canada; www.canadianharambee.ca.

Remember Greensboro, North Carolina? On November 3, 1979, Klansmen and Nazis opened fire on members of the Communist Workers Party who were staging an anti-Klan demo, killing five. (One of them was my old friend from Harvard Divinity School, Bill Sampson, an antiwar activist, a union organizer and a lovely and harmless man.) Two all-white juries exonerated the killers; in June 1985, survivors won a civil suit against their attackers, the Greensboro police and a police informant. You can honor the dead and help progressive organizing in the South with a donation to the Greensboro Justice Fund, PO Box 1594, Northampton, MA 01061; www.gjf.org.

Finally, the incredibly energetic feminist writer and organizer Jennifer Baumgardner (you've seen her byline in *The Nation*) has had the brilliant idea of producing a video featuring women who've had abortions and are really glad they had that right—offering a counterstory to what's becoming the dominant narrative, in which ending a pregnancy is a trauma from which a woman never recovers. The video is part of a larger project to recast the *Roe v. Wade* anniversary (January 22) as I'm Not Sorry Day, complete with T-shirts and public events. Jennifer's seeking stories as well as donations. You can share yours or find out how you can contribute by e-mailing her at jennifer@manifesta.net. ■

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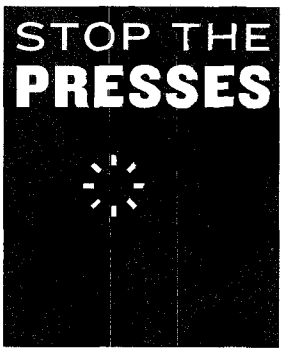
ERIC ALTERMAN

Target: George Soros



To declare oneself an unapologetic liberal in mainstream political debate these days is to invite abuse. The latest miscreant to step out of line is billionaire George Soros, who, after spending nearly $5 billion to promote democracy abroad, was so moved by the behavior of Bush & Co. that he decided to invest some back home to defeat them. Much of the reaction to Soros's announcement that he will spend $15.5 million to fund education campaigns with America Coming Together, voter mobilization drives with MoveOn.org and research activities with the Center for American Progress (CAP)—where I am a senior fellow—has verged on the comical. The *Wall Street Journal* is suddenly exercised about the political influence of "fat cats." A writer in Sun Myung Moon's *Washington Times* complains jingoistically that "the Hungarian native anointed himself a major player in American politics." RNC chair and ex–Enron lobbyist Ed Gillespie laments that Soros, a champion of campaign finance reform, is using what the RNC's Christine Iverson calls "an unregulated, under-the-radar-screen, shadowy, soft-money group" for his nefarious purposes.

But some of the criticism is worrisome. A writer on the conservative website GOPUSA.com termed Soros—get this—a "descendant of Shylock." Even more amazing, Conrad Black's neoconservative *Jerusalem Post* carried a piece in which a writer accused Soros of being a "man who spent a lifetime laboring to transform Henry Ford's International Jew from myth to reality." Meanwhile, the *Journal* editors, before issuing a rare correction, conveniently multiplied Soros's contribution to CAP by a Satanic 666 percent, terming it "reportedly…$20 million" and identifying the money as being directed toward "the likes of Bush-hating pundit Eric Alterman." (I wish I had known this when I happened to have dinner seated next to Soros a couple of nights before the editorial ran; those checks could use a few more zeros.)

The *Washington Post* editorial page, which many people continue to mistake for a centrist—or even liberal—voice, is also up in arms about Soros's giving. Donald Graham told me more than a decade ago that while he enjoyed reading the *Journal* editorial page, he would become "very uncomfortable if the tone of the *Post* editorial page was as harsh and intolerant." Well, Graham may want to start worrying. The *Post* has already adopted the *Journal*'s ploy of attacking liberals who state truths gleaned from its own front page. This past summer, its editors went after Al Gore for leading his party "off a cliff" and validating "just about every conspiratorial theory of the antiwar left" when the former Vice President noted that the Bush Administration had engaged in "a systematic effort to manipulate facts in service to a totalistic ideology that is felt to be more important than the mandates of basic honesty." As I pointed out in this space in July, Gore was merely summarizing a view that any intelligent reader would have to draw from a 5,331-word story by Barton Gellman and Walter Pincus that the *Post* published the very same day.

Regarding Soros, the editors ask Democrats "thrilled with the Soros millions" to "imagine conservative financier Richard Mellon Scaife opening his bank account on behalf of Mr. Bush." Actually it's not so hard. *Post* editors might wish to check out a terrifically reported two-part front-page 1999 *Post* story by former managing editor Robert Kaiser and Ira Chinoy, which clearly demonstrates that Scaife's giving to archconservative Washington organizations dwarfs anything Soros is even contemplating. And many of these Scaife-funded groups, like those alleging the murder of Vince Foster and Bill Clinton's involvement in drug-running out of an Arkansas airport, are a great deal less healthy for the quality of public discourse than anything to which Soros has contributed (although they may have provided sources for both the *Post* and the *Journal* in their frenzied reporting on Clinton's sex life).

Perhaps the strangest sentence is the *Post*'s demand: "Who is he [Soros] to determine the public interest?" Are these people really so wedded to the idea of themselves as the permanent governing establishment that it didn't occur to them to ask themselves, "And for that matter, who the heck are we?"

Even uglier and stupider than the merely political attacks have been the hysterical accusations that Soros is an anti-Semite. The inspiration for these were Soros's off-the-cuff remarks to a group of Jewish organizations, in which he pointed out the obvious: that many people who hate Ariel Sharon's policies blame "Jews" for them and speak and act accordingly. Like everyone who recognizes this simple truth, Soros was not endorsing it. But that didn't stop the self-appointed spokespersons of hard-line Jews everywhere from purposely misinterpreting his words.

Lest we confuse the two issues—as so many genuine anti-Semites would wish—there are two sets of problems here. One is Soros's honesty in speaking to sensitive issues regarding the effects of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. The other is that a liberal is reserving the right to fight back, using some—though certainly not all—of the tactics that have given rise to the current era of untrammeled right-wing hegemony in the United States today.

The *Journal*, the Republicans and the *Post* editors—a trio increasingly marching in lockstep—are mainly upset about the latter. Still, one can't help noticing that none of Soros's critics have demonstrated much interest in offering an honest hearing for his ideas. Indeed, one cannot help wondering just what it is that scares them so about the man. Have the media grown so complacent in the face of conservative attempts to delegitimize liberal dissent that they are now willing to do the job themselves? Are they so cowed by attacks on the So-Called Liberal Media (SCLM) that they feel the need to empower their tormentors? George Soros aims to challenge the prevailing ideological winds in Washington. He doesn't need a weatherman to know which way they're blowing. How fortunate for us that he cares enough about his adopted country to do what he can to reverse them. ■

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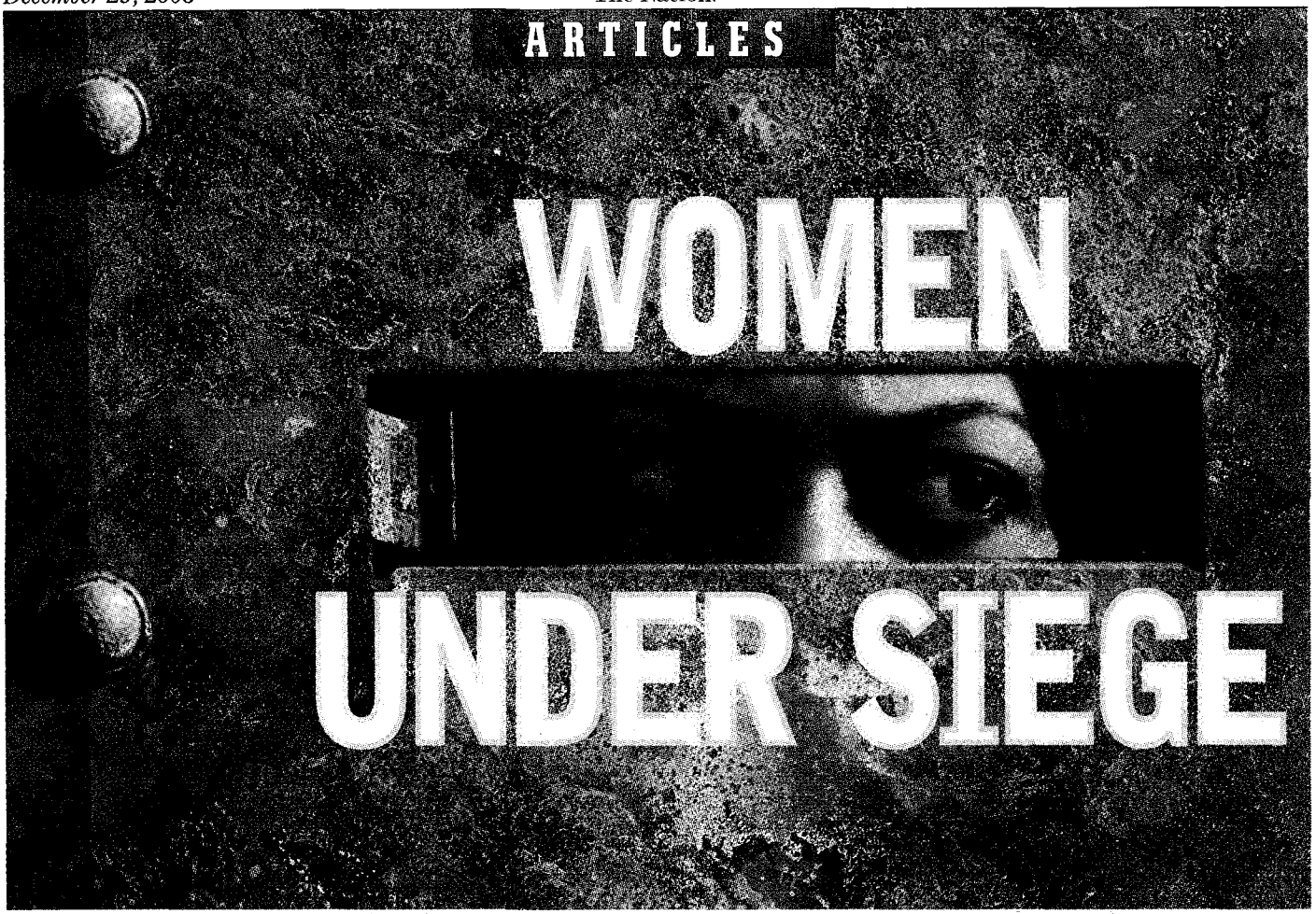

WOMEN UNDER SIEGE

by LAUREN SANDLER

All the shades are drawn in Raba's house on a wide residential street in one of Baghdad's more affluent neighborhoods. Small daughters and nieces streak through a well-appointed living room, leaving giggles and shrieks in their wake, as their young mothers and aunts sip Pepsi from cans and make wry comments in the darkened space. None of these women leave this home, even so many months after the war came to its so-called end. And Raba, a usually spunky twentysomething, is afraid even to stand in her own doorway. "Before the war we were out until 2 o'clock in the morning all the time," she says. "Now I don't even bother to put on my shoes."

Millions of women have found themselves living under such de facto house arrest since the coalition forces claimed Baghdad in April. They have been forced into this situation by a menacing triple threat that has emerged since the war: First, Saddam Hussein threw open the doors to his prisons in October 2002, releasing criminals onto Iraq's tightly policed streets. Then came the fall of the regime and the concomitant crumbling of law enforcement. And now, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) is treating a growing human rights crisis for women as an extracurricular issue at best, leaving women at the mercy of thugs on the streets and the religious parties that have rushed into the political vacuum. Upwards of 400 women have been kidnapped in this city alone, according to various women's groups, and each horror story ripples with alacrity throughout each neighborhood. Raba's story is one of them. As she leans forward to fuss over a tiny niece, her auburn curls part to show a jagged line of black stitches that vertically bisect her scalp. "My wound from the war," she says with a sardonic laugh.

Raba and her fiancé were driving late one summer evening in his Toyota RAV 4 when they were attacked by a band of men engaged in a popular and profitable postoccupation occupation: carjacking. As they were violently booting the fiancé from the car, one of the men decided that Raba would make a nice addition to the evening's spoils. But as he was attempting to rape her in the back seat, the intrepid—more furious than afraid, she says—Raba pulled open the door handle and flung herself from the speeding car. The next day, her fiancé and her brother went to the police station to report the stolen car. They didn't file anything regarding the attempted rape, since, as she says, neither they nor the cops were interested.

"What did I learn from all of this? That what's important here isn't a woman's life, but a nice car," she says, closing the subject. She's more interested in talking about how she hasn't heard a word from her fiancé since the incident, and our conversation spirals easily into a lengthy eye-rolling and hand-squeezing conference on men and commitment—the sort of thing we should be discussing over brunch, or window shopping in the Mansour district, which everyone says is very fashionable but which these days feels like a ghost town. It's impossible for Raba and her relatives to imagine feeling safe anywhere but in this room these days, her sister comments as she jumps at the sound of what we hope is just a car backfiring outside. "You can't imagine what this time has done to us," she says. "This is not how anything was supposed to be."

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If you talk to women throughout Bagdhad, from the brave few who venture out to beauty salons—some of which are now being targeted by fundamentalist groups—to many others at their dining tables, "This is liberation?" emerges as a constant, insistent refrain. Not that they feel any great nostalgia for life under Saddam. Far more women here have stories about husbands and sons who disappeared into mass graves and torture prisons under Saddam than tales of nieces and female neighbors who have gone missing since the war. And sexual violence was a hallmark of a regime that employed men to hold the job of "Violator of Women's Honor," who would videotape themselves raping the wives of men the regime perceived as suspect. But as women here will remind you, the advantage to living under a police state is that the streets feel safe. As demeaning, terrifying and tragic as life under a dictator was for Iraqis, threats were not random acts from random criminals but rather tightly controlled, deliberately deployed terrors. These days the sheer unpredictability of violence is what makes the fear so pervasive. Then, women may have been afraid to step out of line, but now they're afraid even to step outside their homes alone.

It's not hard to find women in Baghdad who tell stories of life since the war that make Raba's tale seem like a lucky break. Eighteen-year-old Zainab and 14-year-old Hanaa can't use their real names, since every day outside the semivacant office building they call home, a man who wants to kill them sits parked in a white car. The two girls were abducted and gang-raped in August when heavily armed former neighbors of theirs burst into their front door late one evening. After several hours of torturous violence at gunpoint Zainab escaped. Hanaa wasn't so fortunate. She spent the next week blindfolded in an abandoned house. Each night her abductors would tell her she was to be sold the next day in the north, as part of a growing ring of trafficking in abducted women. But word got out that Zainab had gone to the police, and so they dropped Hanaa off at her doorstep with the threat that if she told anyone what had happened to her, her family would be murdered. Now every day the girls sit at home in pajamas in the empty rooms they share with their mother and small brother watching their sole luxury, a black-and-white television. Their captors were a prominent Baathist's son and his newly released felon cronies. "What do you expect?" said Zainab when I first met her in the hours before the gang dropped a trembling Hanaa at the door, when she thought she might never see her sister again. "They let out the criminals. They got rid of the law. Here we are."

Under Saddam, the threats were not random. These days it's the sheer unpredictability of violence that makes the fear so pervasive.

Zainab and Hanaa say their only hope rests with the Iraqi police—a cruel irony. It turns out that once the police impounded the car used to abduct the sisters, they closed the case. The lead investigating officer, a portly, chain-smoking man with a shaved head named Major Hasan, refused to term the case kidnapping because the captors were known by the girls in their old neighborhood. "They knew them, yes? So how is it kidnapping?" he says. His treatment of the case is hardly unique—it's standard practice. "All cases that have to do with kidnapping, they are lies, they are not real. And after the war we haven't received any case of rape," says a thickly mustached Lieut. Khalil Majid Ahmed, who manages the all-male-staffed precinct. My questioning of this assertion was met with livid bellowing. "Has anyone tried to assault you? No? So how can you judge? This subject should be closed!" His second in command—with matching mustache—named Lieut. Col. Ra'ad Heider, elaborated vehemently, "Iraqi society has customs and traditions that keep us very well served. No American values are practiced here. Things that have to do with women, rape, that kind of thing—we will never follow American values!"

To women who remember the days before the cultural shifts that followed the Baathist seizure of power in 1968, when freedom from rape was an Iraqi value, not a Western construct, it's this misogynistic culture that is an imposition. "Do you think this is the real Iraq?" says Amal Al-Khaderi, a member of Baghdad's intelligentsia who remembers a very different life here. "This is Iraq since the wars. This Iraq where women are covered, stay inside, do not speak their mind, this is not Iraq, not the real Iraq." Today's Iraqi culture is a multilayered and deeply complicated dish of still-living ancient tribal traditions, varying forms of Islam and the vestiges of a modern secular society that not so long ago saw mini-skirted women working for equal pay, heading ministries and demonstrating for equality throughout the nation's cities. Under Saddam those women receded from view as their groups were outlawed and their rights stripped. Today, when associations like the Iraqi Women's League, the oldest such group in the country, are allowed free speech and organization, subjects like rape go unmentioned for fear of angering the newly empowered religious authorities. "We can't even mention such things," says founding member Wassan Al Souz, who shudders in frustration at the situation in which she finds her group. "Just like under Saddam, the problem is the barrier of fear" in this insecure environment, she says.

That is also why women's groups like the league have decided they cannot take on the penal code Saddam enacted in 1990, which obliterated most rights of women. "What is law? Something you write with a pencil," the dictator once said flippantly, explaining why he could change laws at will and ignore the Iraqi Constitution, which guaranteed equal rights for men and women. His laws remain what the police as well as judges, even women judges I met, enthusiastically continue to enforce since the war. Laws permit a man to take up to four wives, and they deny women rights in issues of inheritance and divorce. Then there are laws like Article 427, which states that a rapist is not guilty of rape if he marries his victim. Or Article 409, which prescribes leniency for any man who murders his female relative if she has had sexual intercourse—including rape—that could dishonor the family.

At the CPA's interim Ministry of Justice, a row of cubicles crammed into a marble stateroom in Saddam's former Baghdad palace, Zakia Hakki taps away at her keyboard with long fingernails. This elegant woman wrapped head to toe in black, who was one of Iraq's first women judges, had just been hired by the CPA to make recommendations about legal reforms. At first she seems

Lauren Sandler, a New York–based journalist, investigated issues of women and culture in Iraq on behalf of the Carr Foundation.

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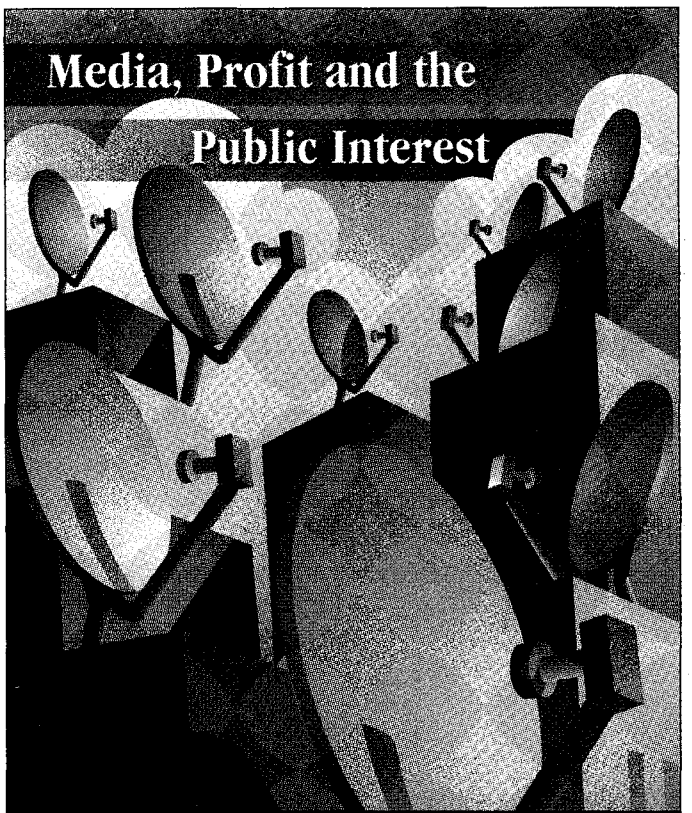
like a true flash of hope for women's rights within the occupation—a progressive past as an activist in Kurdistan, a strong connection to her country, a history of work and study in Washington. But after some prodding she begins to describe the legal reforms she imagines, and the complex ideological contradictions that bind so many Iraqi women present themselves. For all her talk of change, Hakki does not believe Saddam's laws should be jettisoned. "Take polygamy," she says. "We need to change the law. If a man is going to take another wife, it can only be because she is mentally ill, sexually dysfunctional, can't have a child or has AIDS. You know, things like that. We can't just let men do whatever they want just because they want it. We need rules." The new rules, of course, sound awfully similar to the old ones, but she justifies her modest approach simply: These laws exist to protect the sanctity and longevity of the family. And in this country that has known nothing for decades but fear, the family and a strong and self-protecting tribal culture represent the only hope for stability and comfort.

Tension between protecting the family and protecting women's rights is a common theme in Iraq, when women gab over lunch in their homes or discuss politics in the heavily guarded meeting rooms of the CPA compound. This past September, I spoke with Governing Council member Aquila al-Hashimi in the marble jewel box of a building that only recently housed a segment of the fallen regime and now serves as the council headquarters. As a member of the previous Ministry of Foreign Affairs, al-Hashimi was not allowed to leave the country without a male relative, so fierce was the notion that women, even ones in high positions, needed to be protected. This perceived need to protect women, said al-Hashimi, was inextricably linked to the central concept of honor. And honor worked to represent not just men's interests but those of the families they headed. It was the ideal of protecting the family that made the law codes, and the culture that absorbed them, palatable to women. "Take honor killings," said al-Hashimi. "They only exist to protect the family. That may sound crazy, but it is simply a question of culture." (Two days after our conversation, al-Hashimi was fatally shot, leaving only two women on the Governing Council.)

The women who live in fear of "honor" killings have little support in Iraq, as Hadil Jawad attests. After Jawad ran off with her neighbor—a man her family passionately disapproved of—eight years ago, her parents and brother made regular visits to her husband's family's home in the hopes that the couple would arrive and they could make good on their desire to murder their daughter, or "wash the scandal," as it is called here. She and her husband returned to Baghdad after living on the lam before the war, Jawad says, but she still expects every day to be recognized by a relative who will put an end to her life. "I am scared to run into my brother and my uncles, and yet I am still dying to hear news of my family," she sighs. Each time a woman is raped or even kidnapped—since most families assume that the kidnapping of a woman results in rape—her life is endangered not just by her abductors but by her closest relatives. "A lot of women are like me," says Jawad, beginning a litany of horror stories. Jawad, who unlike most women in this city refuses to cover her long wavy hair with the *hijab*, or headscarf, blames Islam and its Sharia law for the culture that she says makes certain her future murder.



Should Media Favor The Public or Their Stockholders?

A debate featuring

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American Business Editor for *The Economist*

W. Kenneth Ferree
Chief of the Media Bureau,
Federal Communications Commission

John Nichols
Washington, DC Correspondent for *The Nation*

Jenny Toomey
Executive Director, Future of Music Coalition

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Other women activists are doing their best to work within the Islamic system, like Manal Omar, a Muslim American who heads the Iraq field office of the Washington-based group Women for Women International. When Omar was attempting to set up work-training programs for women here, she was astonished to hear many women say that they would be breaking Islam's tenets if they took jobs. Omar's response was to approach Shiite clerics throughout the country and convince them to issue fatwas permitting women to work. "It's not news that Islam and women's rights can coexist—I mean look at me," she says, a round face full of urban American attitude glowing from under her *hijab*.

Many Iraqis are hopeful that Islamic leaders will take it upon themselves to institute changes in favor of women. Maybe—but I had to wonder what kind of liberation that would be when I visited a small mosque in Salam City one Friday afternoon. Mosques in Iraq open their main spaces only for men to pray, but this one had announced the seemingly radical decision to offer the space for a women's service instead. That first Friday, more than a hundred women formed lines of black *abayas* (the garment that covers all but a woman's face, hands and feet), performing the elaborate kneeling and standing choreography of Friday prayer in the stifling space. The two-hour service was broken by a solemn sermon, in which the prayer leader repeated for upwards of ten minutes the importance of waking two hours early to prepare meals for husbands and children and to clean the house so that prayer attendance would in no way interrupt domestic duties. "We used to talk about equality," said Hanaa Edwards, an Iraqi activist, after hearing about the service. "Now we only talk about this kind of advancement."

While many Iraqis would see any attempt to help women as an American ploy, the coalition is doing nothing to help them anyway.

A few do still talk about equality, most notably Yanar Mohammed, whose bare arms in this sweltering country would be enough to establish iconoclasm, even leaving aside the radically secular group she has founded since the war, the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq. Mohammed travels with bodyguards and packs a pistol in her compact handbag because of the death threats she has received for her very public views. She has appeared on Al Jazeera arguing that the *hijab* constitutes a form of slavery for women—a view not very popular in a country where Shiite extremists have been invading university classrooms with machine guns to threaten women who will not cover their heads, as they have been doing since summer exams began in occupied Basra. "Who should we fear more these days, these religious fascists or the men who are kidnapping and raping women?" she says, her dark eyes shining in anger.

But talk to Mohammed about how to establish a secular democracy and impossible contradictions abound. "Of course everyone should be given a free vote," she says, "and of course we should have a secular government." The trouble is, it's likely that only a small minority of Iraqis would use their votes to such ends. Indeed, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the cleric who has the ear and esteem of the majority of Shiites, who in turn make up the majority of the country, recently proposed that Islam be "considered a main source for the constitution," according to Jalal Talabani, current president of the Governing Council. This will surely add momentum to a constitutional process already on that track. The council's appointed Constitutional Provisional Committee (an all-male gang) had intimated that an Iraqi constitution would need to have a distinctly Islamic flavor. Now Sistani and his representatives want the general public to elect the constitution's drafters—a move that would almost certainly ensure a Sharia-based constitution, which does not bode well for women's rights.

For women, moreover, the sad irony is that while many Iraqis would see any attempt to help them as a US ploy (à la Colonel Heider), the coalition is doing nothing to help them anyway. In the aftermath of so many failed wars, Saddam played the misogyny card as a way of appealing to the millions of Iraqi men who felt their masculinity had been robbed by defeat, and then poverty. The absence of action on the part of the coalition is, in effect, doing much the same thing, sacrificing women to the larger cause of currying favor with an increasingly restive male population.

When the coalition claimed Saddam's palaces as its own and sought to establish legitimacy and control with existing non-Baathist structures, the Shiite majority Saddam had violently ostracized was the most organized game in town. But the coalition failed to grapple with the human rights consequences of a power shift in that direction, especially as far as women, who make up 65 percent of Iraq's war-ravaged population, are concerned. While new governmental ministries were created to support various causes like the environment and displaced people, a ministry of women's affairs was immediately rejected. (Instead, a single person is the dedicated "focal point" for women's issues; none of various people who have occupied that revolving-door position have been permitted any real authority within the coalition.) Over dinner in the palace cafeteria one night, when I discussed the accelerating crisis for women with two high-ranking American officials in the Interior Ministry—which oversees police and security—I was told with shocking candor as my pen perched over my reporter's notebook: "We don't do women." It's hardly a dirty secret that our government abroad views women's rights as at most a secondary concern, yet it was thoroughly sobering to hear this lack of interest so casually discussed.

As anticoalition violence erupts with greater intensity, officials retreat farther behind the tank-guarded checkpoints of their security compound, and many of the existing resources of Iraq—the once-great university system, the numerous women's groups that dream of the opportunity to take advantage of their newfound freedom of speech, the millions of educated women who survived the terrors of the regime only to be threatened by random abduction, rape and murder—are being overlooked and squandered in favor of tribal and Islamic structures and the airlifted and imposed rule by US-led committee. The Americans' utter lack of comprehension of what Iraqi women have to offer was apparent at a meeting about women's work prospects, when one well-meaning camouflage-clad officer said to rows of female attendees, including many professionals such as judges and doctors, "Under the occupation, you can think about

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what work is appropriate for women to do—you don't have to just sew anymore."

Before her death, Governing Council member al-Hashimi warned of putting too much emphasis on what the coalition could accomplish through top-down initiatives. "You must not impose by laws what culture should be. Culture creates laws, not the other way around," she said. Of course, laws can provide a buffer when culture fosters human rights abuses. But al-Hashimi's ideas resonate with many people working to address the difficulty of life as an Iraqi woman, like Hanaa Edwards, whose group, called Al Amal (Arabic for "hope"), is instituting human rights training courses for women throughout Baghdad, modeled on a program thousands of women have attended in the more liberal Kurdish north. "I used to think in terms of political reform," says this veteran of the 1960s student movement. "Now I think about the grassroots. Now, humanitarian assistance is what's important." It is perhaps unimaginable now that the governing authority could work at the grassroots level as well, establishing shelters for women in need, or reforming the social infrastructure, which now requires women who have been raped to undergo a forensics test at the morgue and counsels women seeking divorce to work it out with their husbands.

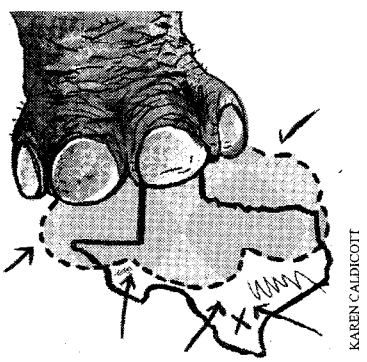
Unless the coalition and the conservative tribal and religious authorities of Iraq are somehow compelled to recognize that women are crucial to the future of the country—not just as mothers and homemakers but as full members and leaders of Iraqi society—the current situation is not likely to improve. Which means, for example, that men will continue to have the right to marry additional wives without spousal permission, except if Hakki's reforms pass, in which case they would have to demonstrate their wife (or wives') sexual dysfunction or mental illness. Hadil Jawad will continue to live under threat, knowing that if her brother or father or uncle sees her he may shoot her in the head, or strangle her with a rope, or stab her to death with a kitchen knife, as a member of the Iraqi police nonchalantly described the manner of so many honor killings. Zainab and Hanaa will continue to believe that the Iraqi police force that ignores them is in fact safeguarding them as they hide out at home. And each day it becomes less likely that Raba and the millions of women like her will stay out until 2 o'clock in the morning any time soon. ■

THE REPUBLICAN DRIVE REPRESENTS A POWER GRAB UNPRECEDENTED IN SCALE AND TIMING.

The Redistricting Wars

SASHA ABRAMSKY

Traditionally, state legislatures and courts spend the year after the national Census redrawing Congressional maps to fit the new demographic realities. The party in control of the most state legislatures and governorships at that moment in time is able to muscle through federal Congressional redistricting maps tailored to benefit itself. And then, having spent a year maneuvering for advantage, the parties back off the issue and accept that the new maps will stay in place until the next Census. That, at least, is how things have worked in the past.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Recently, however, having gained control over more state legislatures than it's had since 1952 (twenty-one to the Democrats' sixteen, plus twenty-nine governorships), the GOP has not only redrawn the state electoral maps after the Census, it has broken with the decennial tradition and rammed through redistricting plans in mid-decade, most notably in Texas but also in Colorado, where the State Supreme Court recently tossed out the Republican legislature's new plan.

This aggressive Republican drive represents a Congressional power grab unprecedented in scale and timing. It is being executed with the encouragement of White House operatives from Karl Rove on down, with the full-throttle support of GOP House majority leader Tom DeLay. And its aim is to shore up the party's Congressional majorities for the next decade.

Amid the brouhaha over redistricting in Texas earlier this year, Representative Martin Frost's office requested that Library of Congress researchers investigate when the last mid-decade redistricting occurred. David Huckabee, specialist in American national government for the Congressional Research Service, wrote back that "there are no prohibitions for states to revisit the issue of redistricting during the decade following the census, but they appear not to have done so except in response to legal action during the past 50 years." In other words, actions like those undertaken by Texas Republicans have never in living memory been launched by either political party.

"There's been a gentlemen's agreement over time by both parties that you only do redistricting in a year ending in one," explains Representative Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat. "If a party gains ascendancy later in the decade, it's unprecedented to do it at the next election." Redistricting, says Rob Richie of the Center for Voting and Democracy, "is a longstanding blood-sport. The Democrats traditionally had stuck it to Republicans because they ran so many more states. But they weren't creative enough to realize they could do it mid-decade."

The Texas redistricting fight, which featured Democrats fleeing to New Mexico and Oklahoma to prevent the legislature from having a quorum and federal law enforcement officials sent into

Sasha Abramsky is the author of Hard Time Blues *(St. Martin's) and co-author of the recently published Human Rights Watch report* Ill Equipped: US Prisons and Offenders With Mental Illness.

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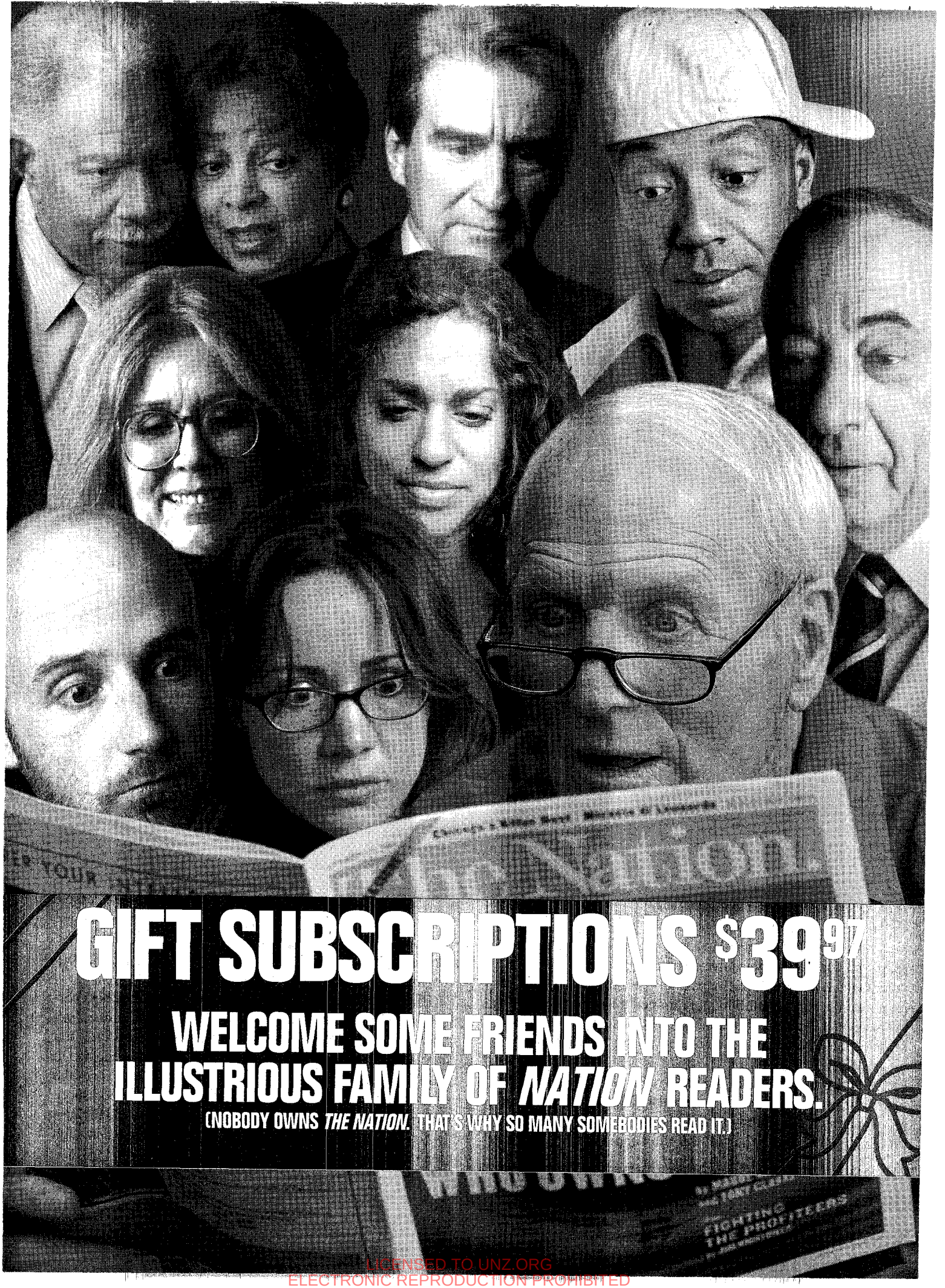
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action by Republican politicians to track down the absentee Donkeys, received by far the most publicity. Wrongly, much of the media portrayed it as a quirky Texas cowboy story with no wider ramifications. In reality, however, this was a power grab orchestrated by the national Republican Party and clearly intended to consolidate power nationally.

To recap the Texas saga in brief: State Republicans, goaded by Tom DeLay and supported by DeLay-sponsored political action committees (Americans for a Republican Majority and Texans for a Republican Majority), as well as the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, successfully broke the Democratic resistance to mid-decade redistricting. On October 13, they managed to pass a redistricting plan that all concerned agreed would likely give the Republicans an additional seven seats in the House of Representatives.

On many levels, it was a sleazy political power play. Supporters of redistricting were buoyed by having one of the country's top redistricting attorneys serving both the State of Texas and Republican lobbying groups most active in pushing for the state to implement a new Congressional map. Since May of this year, according to the Texas Attorney General's office, the State of Texas has paid three attorneys more than $200,000 to do legal work on the redistricting issue. One of them, Andy Taylor, is also being paid for his redistricting expertise by the avowedly partisan Texans for a Republican Majority. (Taylor, along with DeLay, Rove and a number of state Republican politicians, did not return my calls requesting interviews.) TRM, largely bankrolled by a Republican front organization named the Texas Association of Business, has spent the past several years working to achieve Republican control of Texas's political machine, at least in part with the intent of parlaying this power into a redistricting advantage for federal Congressional elections.

'I talked to a number of Republican legislators and they said, "I've got to do this. I'm being forced to do this."' —US Representative Diane DeGette

While the attorneys and the political players argued that the redistricting was solely concerned with divvying up the Texas Congressional delegation to more accurately reflect party loyalties in the Lone Star State, opponents believe that they were attempting to nullify the impact of a large number of conservative voters who split their votes between Republicans in presidential and local elections and Democrats in Congressional races.

Texas was only one part of a national strategy. In Colorado, after the Republicans won control of the state legislature in 2002, they promptly redrew a redistricting map imposed by the courts a little more than a year before. On December 1, Colorado's Supreme Court stepped into the fray, ruling that the state's Constitution only permitted redistricting once per decade, and that since the districts had already been redrawn by the courts in 2001–02, the Republicans had acted illegally by instituting a fresh round of redistricting this year. The court's majority held that "the state constitution limits redistricting to once per census.... Having failed to redistrict when it should have, the General Assembly has lost its chance to redistrict until after the 2010 federal census."

This decision has given new hope to the Texas Democratic Party in its lawsuit seeking to overturn the Republican coup. While the Texas State Constitution does not, apparently, explicitly forbid multiple redistrictings within a single decade, opponents of the redistricting plan have argued that it violates the voting rights of minorities by reducing the number of seats effectively controlled by minority voters; they have also argued that politically motivated redistricting is inherently unlawful. A three-member panel of federal judges is slated to hear the case starting in mid-December. Already Tom DeLay and other top Republicans have been subpoenaed in the case.

Yet even as these lawsuits wend their way through the courts, there are rumors that Republicans elsewhere are planning similar power grabs. In Ohio, in particular, there are rumors that Republicans are planning mid-decade redistricting.

In each state where mid-decade redistricting has become a major issue, key Republican state representatives told the media that they had been telephoned about the redistricting issue by Karl Rove. The *Washington Post* reported that Rove even phoned one GOP state senator in Texas who was opposed to redistricting to indicate how important this issue was to President Bush. "It was the most unbelievable raw exercise of power," recalls US Representative Diane DeGette, a Colorado Democrat. "The leadership suspended rules and just rammed it through. I talked to a number of Republican legislators and they said, 'I've got to do this. I'm being forced to do this.'" Other White House confidantes, including ex–Bush spokeswoman Karen Hughes, are also known to have discussed the issue with Texas Governor Rick Perry.

While White House officials acknowledge that Rove talked with some state legislators about redistricting, the White House and the national Republican Party have repeatedly denied that the Administration has been orchestrating a redistricting power grab. They portray the Rove conversations as the innocuous musings of one lone individual. It's a point of view Democrats aren't buying. "Rove is the national Republican Party," asserts Representative Frost. "He's the President's chief political operative. He's not doing this on his own. It would be inconceivable for him to not be doing it for the Republican Party."

In addition to the machinations in Texas, Colorado and Ohio, a particularly robust round of routine post-Census redistricting had already occurred in 2001–02 in four crucial swing states where the Republicans had control of the state apparatus. In Michigan, in 2000 the Democrats had a 9-to-7 edge in Congressional representation; in 2002, despite the Democrats' polling 49 percent, as against 48 percent for the GOP, according to the Center for Voting and Democracy, the Republicans ended up with a 9-to-6 edge in Congressional seats. In Pennsylvania, Republicans created a 12-to-7 divide instead of the 11-to-10 split resulting from the previous election. In Florida, the Republicans expanded their majority from 15-to-8 to 18-to-7, "entirely due to redistricting," according to the center's Rob Richie. Similarly, in Ohio, even before the rumors about additional mid-decade changes, redistrict-

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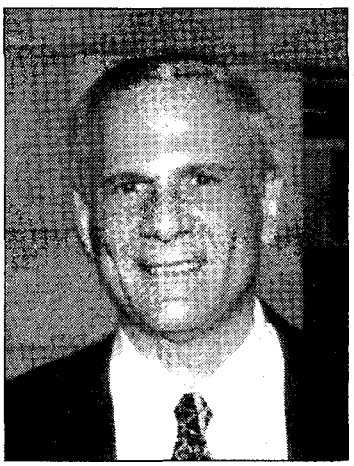

DAVID PROTESS

Professor Protess is the founding director of the Innocence Project at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. The project brings together journalism students, professional journalists, lawyers and private investigators to re-examine cases with questionable convictions.

Illinois Governor George H. Ryan publicly credited the work of David Protess and his students in his decision to suspend executions and grant clemency to every prisoner on death row. In the past twelve years, the Innocence Project has played a direct role in the release of eight innocent men in Illinois, six of whom had been convicted of capital crimes.

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ing had already moved a seat into the GOP column.

The US Supreme Court heard arguments on December 10 in *Vieth v. Jubelirer*, a case challenging the constitutionality under the equal protection clause of Pennsylvania's newly gerrymandered Congressional boundaries. Several Democratic Congressmen, the ACLU and the NYU Brennan Center for Justice have all filed friend-of-the-court briefs in the case. In the meantime, however, the redistricting maps remain in place.

All told, assuming support for the two major parties remains roughly constant, and assuming the Supreme Court does not step into the fray too aggressively, the 2001 redistricting in newly GOP-controlled Florida, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, coupled with the ongoing power grab in Texas, Colorado and possibly Ohio, could give the Republicans up to twenty additional House seats in the next election. The cumulative impact of this change will make it far harder for the Democrats to secure a Congressional majority over the course of the next several election cycles.

Beyond controlling a historically exceptional number of state polities, the Republicans have also been aided in their plans by the advent of extraordinarily powerful redistricting software. In the decade-plus since the last round of redistricting following the 1990 Census, the technology of redistricting software has improved to the point where any organization can load sophisticated mapping programs onto their operatives' laptops, plug in demographic variables and generate devastatingly accurate redistricting maps designed to concentrate or diffuse party supporters in units tailor-made to benefit one party over another.

"The fact that the software's really affordable means a lot of these groups are using it. It's about $5,000 a copy," says Howard Simkowitz, product manager for Maptitude for Redistricting, a high-selling software package produced by the Caliper Corporation. Ten years ago, explains Simkowitz, "it would have been probably ten times as much. The price is way down. We got into the redistricting market in a big way this time around. It's become a lot easier to build districts that are lopsided districts, because people can understand the data so much better. You're able to really manipulate the data quickly, to try different scenarios, to move the boundaries around and see what that means."

Parties can now work out the most effective ways either to ghettoize their opponents' votes into a small number of extremely safe seats, or dilute their votes by redrawing Congressional boundaries so as to break up voting blocs into several different districts thought to be populated by a majority from the other party. Indeed, the power of this software is mentioned in the US Supreme Court briefs as one more bit of evidence indicating that those who draw the Congressional lines now effectively control the contours of Congress.

While in theory the redistricting technology that has recently come online is party-neutral, in practice the maps produced by the party in control of state legislatures at the time the software became widely available were implemented wholesale, while the maps produced by those affiliated with the minority party are essentially little more than whimsical wish lists. Because of the current state political landscape, the advent of this technology has further played to the Republicans' advantage.

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In Texas, for example, the Republicans chose to concentrate Democratic votes into a handful of massively safe Democratic seats, in the process diluting the Democratic presence in many other seats that, until this year, were considered competitive for both parties. While such practices have a long history, the precision of the new software makes it that much easier to create boundaries that are virtually invulnerable to electoral surprises. Thus it makes those in control of the map-making that much more important within the political process. Many Democrats believe the Republican strategy in Texas ultimately involves creating a handful of ultrasafe Democratic seats based on the votes of African-Americans and Latinos, while ringing these seats with safe Republican districts dominated by conservative white voters.

Absent an extraordinary collapse in levels of public support for the GOP, or a comprehensive Supreme Court ruling against the practice of out-and-out political gerrymandering during redistricting battles, the result of all this maneuvering is likely to be a Republican stranglehold on the House of Representatives for the rest of the decade. And this is despite the fact that the electorate is split virtually down the middle in its support for the two main parties. "Not counting 2002," a year in which the Republicans polled better than in recent elections, helped by the coattails effect of the wartime popularity of President Bush, "the last three elections before that had less than 1 percent difference between Democrats and Republicans," says Steve Hill of the Center for Voting and Democracy. "That's only happened seven times in the past century. It's conceivable that [as a result of redistricting] you could see Democrats winning more of the popular vote nationwide than Republicans, yet winning less of the seats."

The Republicans are playing a very risky game. As with the 2000 presidential election and the California gubernatorial recall election, by undermining the traditional time constraints on redistricting, they have carried out an end run around the accepted parameters of political partisanship. In so doing, they are greatly diminishing the ability of the country's political structures to float above the debates and passions engendered by day-to-day politicking. By impinging on the structures themselves, the Republican machine may ultimately render stable governance a halcyon vision from the past. For what one party does, the other party is sure to follow up on.

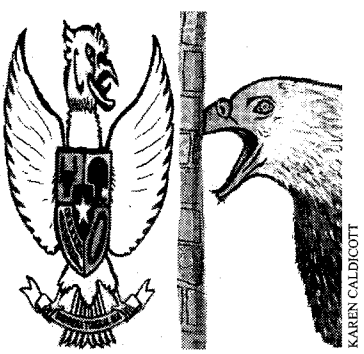
Some strategists believe that the Democrats, when they still controlled the legislature and governorship in California, should have broken up the Republican voting bloc in conservative Orange County by extending the boundaries of overwhelmingly Democratic districts from Los Angeles southward. "The Democrats had the chance to do in California what Tom DeLay is doing in Texas," states Steve Hill. "The Democrats didn't leave themselves enough opportunities to retake the House. They're going to suffer that problem now throughout the rest of the decade. This is the winner-take-all system. That's the game." Now, in the states they still control, the Democrats will likely face tremendous pressure to try to counteract the Republican seat grab in Texas and Colorado. With both Democrats and Republicans scrambling to redraw Congressional lines after each election, a downward cycle of political one-upmanship has now become a virtual certainty. ■

EVEN MODERATES WHO HAVE DENOUNCED TERRORISM FEAR BEING SEEN AS U.S. PUPPETS.

Losing Friends in Indonesia

SUZANNE CHARLÉ

This is the second article in a series examining how the Bush Administration's war on terror has transformed politics, reshuffled alliances and altered the dynamics of local conflicts around the world. —The Editors



A major casualty in President Bush's "war on terrorism" has been the good will of moderate Muslims toward the United States. Nowhere is this more evident than in Indonesia. "The bottom has indeed fallen out of support for the United States," note the American authors of "Changing Minds, Winning Peace," a policy paper distributed to US embassies in October. "In Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, only 15 percent view the US favorably, compared with 61 percent in early 2002."

This precipitous drop—the largest in the world, as one US diplomat in Jakarta points out with sadness—is twisting policies and politics in Indonesia, a fledgling democracy already struggling with a shaky economy, rampant corruption and internal separatist movements. "The genius of the radicals is that their aims have been augmented by Bush's policies," said Nurcholish Madjid, a highly respected Muslim scholar and a presidential hopeful. "Indonesians are not happy with the war against terrorism, despite the success of their police in fighting it, primarily because they don't trust the US government," said Sidney Jones, southeast Asia project director of the International Crisis Group (ICG). "They don't want to be a part of a US-led campaign. On this, there's virtually no difference between the moderates and the fringe radicals."

Indonesians criticize Bush's conflation of Arab terrorism with Islam, and complain that his policies demonstrate a double standard, chief among the examples being the US failure to respond to human rights abuses against Palestinians by Israel and visa policies that make it extremely difficult for Indonesians, no matter

Suzanne Charlé is co-editor of Indonesia Under Suharto, *to be published this year by the Lontar Foundation.*

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what their religion, to enter the United States. They condemn his disregard for the United Nations and worry about his unilateral war in Iraq. "The situation in Iraq today bears momentous implications on the global war against terrorism," Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda warned at an international conference on security this month, adding that the "arbitrary pre-emptive war" against Iraq has set a precedent for other nations.

Words like arrogant, bullying, imperial, neocolonial and a new pharaoh sprinkle elite Indonesians' comments about President Bush; more vehement adjectives pepper tabloids, Muslim websites and some clerics' sermons. There is a sense that America, now the world's only superpower, is a superbully, lacking respect for other nations' opinions or even their right to have opinions. "Right now, if you believe Bush, Indonesia is known only as an exporter of terrorism," said Rizal Ramli, a former minister of finance under President Abdurrahman Wahid (better known as Gus Dur). "That's now our only famous export."

Ramli and other political analysts worry about the negative impact of Bush's war on terrorism on the political landscape in Indonesia. "The US foreign policy is now focused on terrorism—but the fact is, here and elsewhere, economic progress and recovery is much more important," said Ramli. "Poverty is equated with radicalism, whether it's religious or other forms of extremism. If we don't see economic recovery—and for that to happen, we'll need US help—in the long term, there will definitely be more extremists."

Buddhists and Christians here are equally dismayed. Ignas Kleden, a sociologist with the Center for East Indonesian Affairs in Jakarta, says that Islamist hard-liners have come to the fore by playing on animosity against Bush. "They make use of the momentum, call for a demo—give out some money to students and others to show up—and they appear to the public, here and abroad, as speakers for Indonesia. They want to consolidate their position as an important wing in the country's politics—which they are not." One example of this occurred when fifteen terror suspects were arrested in Central Java. There was a well-organized protest of 20,000 people. No senior Indonesian official came to the defense of the police, notes the ICG's Jones; on the contrary, there seems to be an orchestrated campaign to go after the police.

Extreme PC

Jones, who is heading a project to trace Indonesian terrorism and its roots, comments that although there are dangerous terrorists in Indonesia, many Indonesian Muslims still do not believe that Jemaah Islamiah (JI), an alliance of local groups, was responsible for acts including the Bali bombs in 2002 and the bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta this past August. After the Bali bombs, conspiracy theories were rampant, she says, with the CIA heading the list of suspects. "The conspiracy theories started to die down with the openness of the trials of the Bali bombers and the saturation coverage in the press," said Jones. They swirled again after the capture in Thailand of Riduan Isamuddin, better known as Hambali. Intelligence experts in Singapore and the United States say that Hambali is a high-level figure in JI and received funds from Al Qaeda for the Bali bombing—claims that Jones says have been supported by various documents, researchers and testimony in the trials. Hambali is being held incommunicado by the United States, but the cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, who is accused of being the spiritual leader of JI and who just won the appeal of his conviction for sedition, denies that he or his former student Hambali had any link to Al Qaeda. All they have done, he says, is campaign to impose Sharia—Islamic law. The leader of the Indonesian Mujahideen Movement, MMI, has, in the past, suggested that the person being held by the Americans is an imposter. The US authorities have refused to turn Hambali over or even to let Indonesian police directly interview him.

Indonesians argue that Hambali's testimony would have helped in the recent trial of Bashir and is necessary for other upcoming trials. In recent years, there have been some fifty bombings in Indonesia, in addition to the Bali and Jakarta attacks. "I and other moderate Muslims are sickened by the bombings," said Salim Said, an expert in military affairs who has taught in the United States. "But America doesn't help us. We need Hambali for our trials to convince the conservatives inside and outside of Indonesia that he is really part of the terrorist plot." Bush has promised access sometime in the future. In the meantime, many Indonesians remain skeptical; in December Bashir's sentence was reduced from four years to three after his appeal victory.

There is a sort of Muslim political correctness at work in Indonesia, and even leaders who have spoken out against terrorism hesitate to condemn JI, whose name translates as "Islam community." Hasyim Muzadi, the leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, has avoided taking a firm stand, for fear of being accused of kowtowing to the United States. Top government officials such as coordinating minister for politics and security Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (another potential presidential candidate) and police chief Da'i Bachtiar have condemned JI in speeches in the United States, but have yet to repeat those accusations publicly in Indonesia. Megawati Sukarnoputri, whose brief presidency has been marked with indecision and an unwillingness to deal with tough issues, has not banned JI or, for that matter, even publicly condemned the group. Instead, she has increasingly depended on the military to respond to the situation, reinforcing their already close ties.

Playing the Islamist Card

Political analysts say that the "back to the barracks" policy actively pursued by Gus Dur during his brief term as president is being slowed as Megawati bends to US pressure to bolster the military. In a May 2003 poll, 68 percent of Indonesians questioned said they wanted an authoritarian leader who can "save Indonesia." Moderates already see the military as asserting political influence behind the scenes. Now the worry is that some officers—particularly those who remain close to former dictator Suharto and his still-powerful associates—might take center stage. When General Wiranto, the former chief of Indonesia's armed forces and an indicted war criminal, announced his bid for the presidency, crooning nationalistic ballads to crowds, few analysts took him seriously. Now he is one of the leading contenders to run as the candidate of GOLKAR, Suharto's political machine and one of the two major national parties.

As the mid-2004 presidential election approaches—the first direct election in Indonesian history—others are using resentment toward Bush's policies to jockey for position. Vice President

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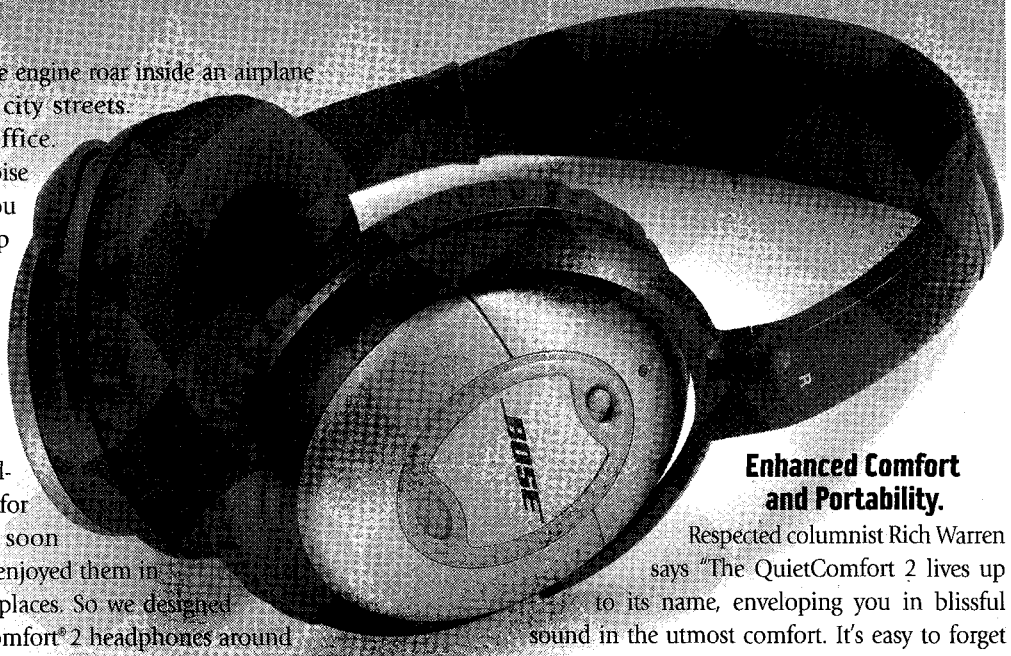

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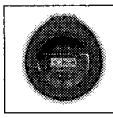

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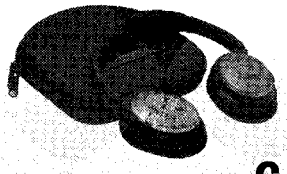

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Hamzah Haz, yet another presidential hopeful, called the United States "the king of terrorists" because of its "war crimes" in Iraq, and he publicly disagreed with Megawati when she voiced support for the United States in the days following September 11. Both he and M. Din Syamsuddin, vice chairman of the 30-million-strong Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second-largest Islamic organization and arguably its most influential, have been vocal defenders of Abu Bakar Bashir. (Syamsuddin likened Bush to a "drunken horse" and castigated the US "need for oil and gas from the lands of the Muslim world.")

Indonesian moderates argue that in many ways the Bush Administration's war on terror has made their job of nurturing democracy harder. The long imprisonment of Muslims without judicial review in Guantánamo is for many a display of US double standards regarding Muslims. Lilis Nurul Husna, director of NU's Human Resource Studies and Development Institute, suggests that Bush's policies run counter to his message of democracy: "The real message seems to be power equals right."

Hard-liners, meanwhile, have taken their cues from the Bush Administration, as evidenced by proposals for an antiterrorism act that would allow suspects to be held without judicial review. In the first round of debates, liberal members argued that there were already laws on the books sufficient to the task; the draconian law, they argued, would bring back the dark practices of the Suharto era. In reply, supporters pointed to the US Homeland Security Act.

'I used to allude to American democracy and Jefferson and the Federalist Papers. Now, no more Jefferson.' —editor Bambang Harymurti

For its part, the Indonesian military has lifted pages directly out of the US military game plan in Iraq for its campaign against the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which has been waging a separatist struggle in that northwestern province since the 1970s. Starting this past May, when President Megawati declared martial law, the army has carried out its own "shock and awe" operation. Foreign journalists were for the most part denied entry, while Indonesian reporters were "embedded" with the army. Interviews with GAM fighters or suspected sympathizers were prohibited; TV feeds were broadcast from state-of-the-art government studios.

If that sounds familiar to Americans, there's a reason: According to two sources quoted in a recent Human Rights Watch report, officers from Indonesia's armed forces actively sought US advice and guidance on how to manage the media with respect to Aceh.

There are other similarities. The Indonesian campaign in Aceh, like America's in Iraq, has not gone as quickly as planned. Six months into the operation, the military has killed about 900 GAM members and 300 citizens; more than 1,800 have been arrested. What was to have been a lightning blitz has been extended another six months. To avoid international criticism, Jakarta cast GAM as "terrorists" (one senior adviser to Megawati called the campaign the "blessing of September 11"). Indonesia flirted briefly with the notion of applying to the UN to have GAM officially declared as such, but then decided against it, since the government would have had to allow international observers into the region, access that has been denied since the declaration of martial law. "The international community should not allow the Indonesian government to use legitimate concerns about terrorism in Indonesia to deflect attention from equally legitimate concerns about the current crisis in Aceh," warned Brad Adams, executive director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division.

Muzzling the Press

The Indonesian press, robust in its investigation of what is commonly referred to as KKN (corruption, collusion and nepotism) since the fall of Suharto, has suffered a spate of attacks—attacks that have received little attention domestically or internationally, thanks to the focus on terrorism. In Aceh, where the martial law commander has stated, "I want all news published to contain the spirit of nationalism," some journalists have been physically threatened when they failed to heed the message. In Jakarta, the government has been using defamation laws that have been on the books since the colonial period to convict and sentence journalists, most recently for a story insulting the president and a cartoon lampooning the convicted Speaker of the House. "These prosecutions cast a shadow over all the human rights gains made in Indonesia" since the fall of Suharto, noted a recent Human Rights Watch report.

Powerful corporate interests are also using the court in an attempt to silence critics. Bambang Harymurti, editor in chief of *Tempo* magazine (Indonesia's equivalent to *Time*), is now in court, fighting for the life of his publication against suits brought by a businessman who has charged *Tempo* and its editors with civil and criminal libel and defamation. All these attacks have created "a culture of fear within the media community," according to Indonesian human rights lawyer Todung Mulya Lubis, who with a number of other concerned lawyers has worked on the cases pro bono.

In between court appearances, Bambang has been on the lecture circuit, talking to various groups about the importance of a free press. But recently his job has been made harder, as Indonesians see the idea of the free press under attack in the United States, with embedded journalists in Iraq and what Indonesians perceive to be one-sided reportage by CNN and Fox News (received here via satellite). To make his message more believable, he says with regret, Bambang has had to change his pitch: "I used to allude to American democracy and Jefferson and the Federalist Papers," Bambang said. "Now, no more Jefferson. As a replacement, I started looking to England, but I've decided better to look to Europe—perhaps Rousseau and Montesquieu."

Nurcholish Madjid, the Muslim scholar, agrees that the United States is no longer Indonesia's sole template for democracy. "Indonesia is a nation in the making, born out of the imagination," he notes. "In the 1940s, when we wanted to set up a political system, we looked to America, which was then under Roosevelt. We chose a presidential system, and like America, we took a bird to symbolize freedom—yours the eagle, ours the garuda. We placed our national values in a primary document and named it the Declaration of Independence." Now, he says, Indonesia has turned away from the United States and is taking its cues from other established democracies.

And just as Indonesia has to redefine itself, he says, so must

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the world work toward what he calls a "new world equilibrium" that rejects Bush's simplistic good-versus-evil, us-versus-them formula. "We can't have a world like in the past, communism versus capitalism—that is too threatening to world peace," he says. "We have to have a world order based on multiculturalism and pluralism: a world in which there is harmony and cooperation between opposites, like the wings of a bird, left and right, that allow the bird to fly." ■

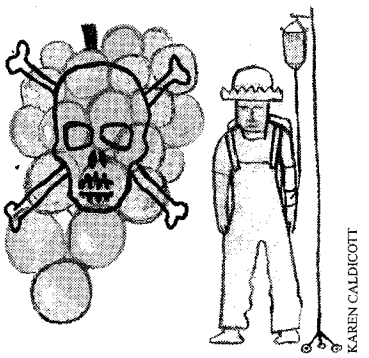
WHILE FARMWORKERS ARE SICKENED BY PESTICIDES, INDUSTRY WRITES THE RULES.

Fields of Poison

REBECCA CLARREN

Sunnyside, Washington

Each summer as the grapes clinging to their vines turn the purple of a deep bruise, Juan Rios feels like he is being poisoned. His head aches, he feels dizzy and nauseous, and his nose won't stop running. A farmworker who moved to this agricultural valley from Mexico, Rios sprays pesticides at a winery from 3 AM to 3:30 PM, five days a week. The pesticides protect the grapes from insects, but Rios suspects that these chemicals are making him sick.



KAREN CALDICOTT

"I remember the first time I worked with the pesticides, I was wearing a full mask while we were spraying, but my nose, it wouldn't stop bleeding. I was worried," says Rios, 39, sitting beneath a portrait of Cesar Chavez and a Mexican flag that hang proudly here in the United Farm Workers union local. "I went to the doctor but he didn't do anything; he just told me to stop working with the pesticides."

For a while he worked in the fields picking instead, but he soon returned to his old job. As a pesticide handler at a unionized winery, Rios, the father of two young girls, makes $10 an hour, $3 more than the average Washington farmworker who picks asparagus or thins apples. Plus, he says with a shrug, as long as he works in agriculture, he is exposed to the chemicals. "I know that the only way things will change is if I stop working in the fields," says Rios, "but agriculture is a huge force here—there really are no other options." Rios is not alone. As many as 300,000 farmworkers are injured annually by pesticides, and of these as many as 1,000 die, according to the most recent available estimate from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

While relatively little has been done to study the long-term effects of pesticides, the research that does exist suggests that farmworkers and their children are vulnerable to a painful array of illnesses. California farmworkers have elevated levels of leukemia and stomach, uterine and brain cancer, according to a study published by the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* in 2001. Four-to-five-year-old children in Mexico who were exposed to pesticides suffer giant lags in development—they had more trouble catching a ball, drawing pictures of people or performing simple tasks involving memory and neuromuscular skills, according to research by Elizabeth Guillette, now a University of Florida anthropologist. Other studies link pesticide exposure to infertility, neurological disorders and birth defects.

But most farmworkers have few options for other employment. The vast majority are recent, non–English speaking immigrants. Since more than half are undocumented, and a slim slice are unionized, relatively few complain to state or federal agencies for fear of losing their job or being deported, according to a 2000 General Accounting Office report. Furthermore, many such workers are more concerned with such immediate problems as finding adequate housing, feeding their families and providing health insurance and education for their children.

Even if they were speaking up about pesticide exposure, fighting for protection is an uphill battle. In 1939 there were thirty-two pesticide products registered in the United States; there are now more than 20,000, and farmers use an estimated 1.2 billion pounds of pesticides annually. This industry is big business with large political clout: Agricultural chemical companies made more than $1.6 million in campaign contributions in 2001–02. The average farmworker made $8,750 in 1999–2000.

This disparity of wealth and power helps explain why the federal government has long ignored the plight of farmworkers, creating what has been called one of the more shameful environmental-health stories in this country's history. "Despite the fact that farmworkers do extremely hard work and conduct utterly essential tasks, they are the most ignored, exploited and vulnerable population in this country. Their health needs are entirely subordinated by the government's need to make money for big companies," says Shelley Davis, co–executive director of the Farmworker Justice Fund, a Washington, DC–based nonprofit. "When you compare the political power of industry with the power of farmworkers there's no contest."

The waiting room at the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic in Toppenish, Washington, is packed with dark-haired children who spill out of chairs to play on the floor, young men reading Spanish-only newspapers next to an old woman adorned with dark Jackie O. sunglasses and a fuchsia scarf around her head. Everyone wears the same tired and impatient look reserved for hospital waiting rooms. In a back hall of the three-building complex, past a series of bilingual signs, Dr. Paul Monahan talks about the challenges of diagnosing and treating pesticide poisoning.

The symptoms are vague. Most farmworkers aren't told what chemicals they are exposed to, or about the long-term health

Rebecca Clarren is a freelance writer living in Portland, Oregon.

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effects. That means nine out of ten sick farmworkers won't even mention pesticide exposure as a concern, says Monahan, an internist for more than thirty years at the clinic. Furthermore, the medical community and the government have done a poor job of studying the problem. "There's not much in the textbooks about pesticide exposure in farmworkers; it's not in the medical journals, and there are no diagnostic tests. Few people are studying this because there's not a lot of money in it. If you were going to give a lecture on the world of pesticides, there would be a lot of blank slides," he says. "It's the perfect Catch-22: If you can't find it, it must not be there."

In fact, he says, pesticide poisoning is a big problem—pesticides are the only things besides war gases that we intentionally put into the environment to harm things—but because of regulatory failures, exposure continues unabated. When the EPA registers new pesticide products it balances safety and health concerns with economics. Yet without the studies that determine cancer and other risks, critics say, the assessment easily errs on the side of economics. Plus, in the past several years, the Agricultural Re-entry Task Force, a group formed by chemical companies, developed new methodologies for determining the health risks. Even though these methodologies, which systematically underestimate the amount of worker exposure, were not vetted by the EPA's scientific advisory panel, and a panel of scientists selected and paid by industry conducted the peer review, the EPA has begun to use them to evaluate risks.

"This process allows industry more control than usual," says Richard Fenske, a professor of health sciences at the University of Washington who served on the industry panel. "It's a mixture of science and politics."

The reason for this cozy relationship between the EPA and industry, say critics, is that many top agency officials once worked for agricultural or pesticide companies. Prior to serving in the EPA's number two position, EPA Deputy Administrator Linda Fisher lobbied for Monsanto, a top agrochemical company. Adam Sharp, associate assistant administrator in the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, previously worked for the American Farm Bureau Federation, where he criticized EPA efforts to assess pesticide risks, specifically the application of an extra tenfold safety margin for children. Two-thirds of the highest-ranking officials since the OPPTS was established in 1977 now receive at least part of their paycheck from pesticide interests, according to a report by the Environmental Working Group.

"A pattern of a revolving door between industry and the government creates a cloud of uncertainty in the public mind," says Gina Solomon, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Are the regulators protecting farmworkers or are they protecting their associates and friends in the private sector?"

To compound the problem of questionable federal regulations, the EPA has farmed out enforcement to state governments, which are generally more subject to local politics than are federal agencies. For example, in Oregon the legislature recently eliminated funding for a state program that requires farmers to report to the Department of Agriculture each time they spray pesticides. This would create baseline data if poisonings or environmental problems should occur. "I don't believe liabilities exist, because they

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would have been caught in the incredibly complicated process of registration," says Jeff Kropf, an Oregon State Representative and fifth-generation farmer, who fought to gut the pesticide-tracking program. "We are already highly regulated. It needs to be proven that uses of certain chemicals damage human beings before we go forward with knee-jerk regulation."

Thanks to such political pressure, fewer than five states collect accurate, detailed information about which pesticides are used, where, when and in what amounts. The federal government has no clearinghouse for the information that does exist and no specific policy to direct state efforts. Such limited national oversight coupled with local political pressure means that state agencies have little incentive to enforce the law. Of the 5,405 inspections of pesticide poisoning conducted by state departments of agriculture in 2002, only 102 resulted in monetary fines.

"We're a police agency; we should be out looking for problems, but that doesn't happen. We only conduct investigations when someone files a complaint," says David Zamora, a pesticide specialist with the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Local legislators and grower advocates recently pressured Zamora's boss to fire him because, as one grower put it, he's "overzealous." Still employed, Zamora worries his job may be on the line. "We shouldn't be listening to politics [when] making these regulatory decisions, but I see it happening again and again."

EPA officials insist they are striving to protect workers. The agency has funded several long-term studies, is working to develop a better pesticide-poisoning screening process for doctors and has started to compile state investigations of pesticide exposure. "The program [regulating farmworker exposure] seems to be working," says Jack Neylan, a Washington, DC–based EPA branch chief. "This is not to say that it couldn't be improved and nobody thinks we're there yet, but it's something we will continue to look at and work on."

Still, farmworkers and their advocates say they have little faith left in the EPA. Hope for change, say some advocates, lies with reforming immigration policy to strengthen the political clout of migrant workers. In September, Senators Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts and Republican Larry Craig of Idaho proposed legislation that would give agricultural immigrants rights in federal court and better access to labor unions. It would allow those who have been working at least a year without documentation to apply for temporary legal status and, after three to six more years, permanent residency. Advocates like Davis say such a policy would enable workers to demand greater legal protection from pesticides. Workers like Rios aren't placing bets on the government. Instead, Rios says a safer environment for their children may begin with them. "I want to own a vineyard someday," he says. Then he interrupts himself with a laugh and adds, "an organic vineyard." ■

TO COUNTER BUSH, THE DEMOCRATS MUST PRESENT A DIFFERENT VISION OF A SAFE WORLD.

The Character Myth

RENANA BROOKS

If progressives want to defeat George W. Bush in the 2004 election, they first have to understand the sources of his continuing popularity. The good news is that Bush is looking much less invincible than he was just a few months ago. As unemployment remains high and as the casualty list in Iraq grows longer, targets of opportunity are emerging for the Democratic candidates. For example, Bush's job approval rating has declined to 52 percent in the latest *Time*/CNN poll.

KAREN CALDICOTT

Yet Bush remains quite popular by historical standards. Moreover, the task that lies ahead for any Democrat is a daunting one, for a more fundamental reason than what Americans think about Bush's job performance. By repeatedly insisting that only he has the tools and the determination to fend off terrorism in the post–September 11 era, Bush has cultivated feelings of crisis, pessimism, anxiety and a loss of control throughout the nation [see Brooks, "A Nation of Victims," June 30]. He has instilled a sense of dependency in Americans—and found a place in their minds and hearts as the repository of strength, action and control. The electorate passively and often subconsciously relies on his authority and power to act on their behalf. This is why Americans consistently find ways to justify Bush and to convince themselves that he is doing a good job, even when his actions and policies are opposed to their beliefs and values.

But this core of support is not merely a result of post–September 11 patriotism or of the fact that Bush is perceived as a likable, regular guy, as the conventional wisdom has it. The President and his advisers have deliberately cultivated an image and leadership style that fosters these results.

Bush's handlers project the President as a man of character. His team has carefully crafted an image of him as a man who is strong and moral, someone who sticks to his principles and is capable of making tough decisions. This phenomenon was foretold by media philosopher Marshall McLuhan, who warned: "Politics will eventually be replaced by imagery. The politician will be only too happy to abdicate in favor of his image because the image will be much more powerful than he could ever be."

Theory soon became reality. Ronald Reagan was the first

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American politician to demonstrate the power of what I call the character myth, a project launched by his speechwriter Peggy Noonan, whose biography of him was titled *When Character Was King*. The character myth relies on the psychological phenomenon that a person who speaks frequently and passionately about morals is generally regarded as a moral person. According to the character myth, a person who demonstrates that he has "character" need not present any evidence in support of his policies or decisions. They are simply assumed to be correct, since they come from a person with the ineffable quality known as "character." Even though Reagan was divorced and many of his Hollywood friends hardly saw him as a paragon of morality, he managed to present himself in politics as an exemplar of "family values." Reagan was seen as having character for sticking to his principles. He was widely viewed as someone who cut taxes, even after actually raising them. Americans simply ignored all data that did not fit the myth.

When President Bush says 'Our cause is just,' he purposely leaves out the 'according to whom?'

Similarly, Bush's handlers use the rhetoric of morality to bypass people's resistance to his ideas and to convince them that they should not go beyond their core belief that "Bush is doing the right thing." This imagery of strength and morality is inspired by the ideas of conservative philosopher Leo Strauss, who has strongly influenced many within the inner circle of the Bush Administration. As James Atlas wrote in a piece on Strauss in the May 4 *New York Times*, "To [some] theorists, the Bush administration's foreign policy is entirely a Straussian creation. Paul D. Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, has been identified as a disciple of Strauss; William Kristol, founding editor of *The Weekly Standard*, a must-read in the White House, considers himself a Straussian; Gary Schmitt, executive director of the Project for the New American Century, an influential foreign policy group started by Mr. Kristol, is firmly in the Strauss camp. One is reminded of Asa Leventhal, the hero of Saul Bellow's novel 'The Victim,' who asks his oppressor, a mysterious figure named Kirby Allbee, 'Wait a minute, what's your idea of who runs things?' For those who believe in the power of ideas, it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to answer: the intellectual heirs of Leo Strauss." Strauss feared the mediocrity that he believed was inherent in democratic societies. He argued that when a strong political leader explains his policies he should develop a mythology for the consumption of the general public that hides his true motivations, because the people will not accept the boldness of the leader's initiatives if they are presented in an unvarnished fashion. This mythology should use the language of morality to mask the candidate's real interests, which are his own survival in power and his ability to continue to exert dominance over the populace.

Psychologists have long understood that people who hold views that are mutually inconsistent, or who perform actions that depart from their values or that threaten their positive self-image, will experience discomfort. This is known as cognitive dissonance. People naturally choose to remove the discomfort through rationalization, thus repairing their self-image as people who are reasonable and moral and act in ways consistent with their values. Bush's leadership style and use of language essentially have created cognitive dissonance in the electorate. The more that Americans observe the Bush presidency pushing policies they do not support, and would normally question, the more they confront the choice of whether to oppose him actively or rationalize away their discomfort. Many Americans have chosen the latter because the President has convinced them that the situation is desperate and that only he can handle the continuing crisis. The more they depend upon Bush, the more they rationalize away any objections they may have to his specific ideas and policies. In this manner, Bush has forged an emotional, visceral relationship with the nation, successfully bypassing conscious resistance and stripping away any sense that he needs to answer to a higher legal or constitutional authority beyond his personal moral force.

President Bush wields the power of a stern, authoritarian parent over the national psyche. Just as such a parent may justify a command with the words "because I said so," Bush has often reverted to explanations in the style of "it's the right thing to do" in order to justify the war on Iraq or his tax cuts. By changing frames in this manner, a political leader can erode resistance to his actions. His shifting, ultimately arbitrary reasoning deters any listener from challenging his ideas and even leads the listener to believe herself or himself incapable of understanding the reasons given for policies or actions.

When people feel overwhelmed, as I believe Americans have been over the past few years, they tend not to think rationally about complex details. Further, many psychologists, sociologists and historians argue that Americans are prone to believe in the Great Person theory—the idea that if a person has the correct personality traits, his instincts will lead to the correct actions regardless of the details of a given situation. However, research shows that no character trait—not courage, charisma or self-confidence—correlates well with effective leadership as defined by historians. For example, Dean Simonton studied 100 personal attributes of all US Presidents, including their personality traits, and found that only one variable—intelligence—correlated with presidential effectiveness as measured by historians.

But Bush's team knows how to exploit the Great Person myth. Bush's deliberately constructed image as a moral leader who knows what is right for America takes the place of rational analysis, and his insistence that we are in an ongoing state of crisis in our war against terror helps to perpetuate this dynamic. Bush and his supporters often silence opposition and dissent by encoding in their arguments a worldview that implies that even to challenge Bush's ideas is immoral and damaging to the social order, and even to the survival of the nation and of Western civilization. Linguists call this device the lost performative. The speaker purposely leaves out the authority behind far-reaching statements in order to pass off controversial viewpoints as the absolute truth. When Bush says "Our cause is just," he purposely leaves out the "according to whom?" Saying "I think the war is just" or "Donald Rumsfeld thinks the war is just" is much different from asserting "Our cause is just." The underlying message from the authoritarian leader is,

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Do exactly as I say, or catastrophe follows. Overgeneralization and false generalization are powerful vehicles for such a leader.

Joan Didion captured this well in her book *Fixed Ideas: America Since 9.11*. She writes: "We had seen the general acquiescence in whatever was presented as imperative by the administration. We had seen the persistent suggestions that anyone who expressed reservations about detentions, say, or military tribunals, was at some level 'against' America. (As in the presidential formulation 'you're either with us or you're with the terrorists.') We had seen, most importantly, the insistent use of September 11 to justify the reconception of America's correct role in the world as one of initiating and waging virtually perpetual war." As Didion suggests, absolutist language overloads people with information and leaves them confused and unable to judge for themselves. They crave simplicity and fall back on the character myth.

Past US Presidents of both parties have consistently chosen to evoke collective principles despite commanding overwhelming and dominant military power, carefully avoiding provocative imagery or dominating attitudes. Presidents typically reach for the language of consensus and empowerment in important speeches and addresses, focusing on the word "we" and presenting themselves as leaders of a strong community, whether domestically or internationally, with shared strengths, abilities and responsibilities.

John F. Kennedy, in his commencement address at American University on June 10, 1963, just after the Cuban missile crisis, declared, "Some say that it is useless to speak of world peace or world law or world disarmament—and that it will be useless until the leaders of the Soviet Union adopt a more enlightened attitude. I hope they do. I believe we can help them do it. But I also believe that we must re-examine our own attitude—as individuals and as a nation—for our attitude is as essential as theirs. And every graduate of this school, every thoughtful citizen who despairs of war and wishes to bring peace, should begin by looking inward—by examining his own attitude toward the possibilities of peace, toward the Soviet Union, toward the course of the cold war and toward freedom and peace here at home."

Ronald Reagan, in his first inaugural address, delivered on January 20, 1981, echoes these collective aims and affirmations of Americans' strength: "And as we renew ourselves here in our own land, we will be seen as having greater strength throughout the world. We will again be the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom. To those neighbors and allies who share our freedom, we will strengthen our historic ties and assure them of our support and firm commitment."

George W. Bush's father, in addressing the United Nations on October 1, 1990, before going into war in the Persian Gulf, placed a notable emphasis on consensus: "We have a vision of a new partnership of nations that transcends the cold war: a partnership based on consultation, cooperation and collective action, especially through international and regional organizations; a partnership united by principle and the rule of law and supported by an equitable sharing of both cost and commitment; a partnership whose goals are to increase democracy, increase prosperity, increase the peace and reduce arms.... We stand together, prepared to swim upstream, to march uphill, to tackle the tough challenges

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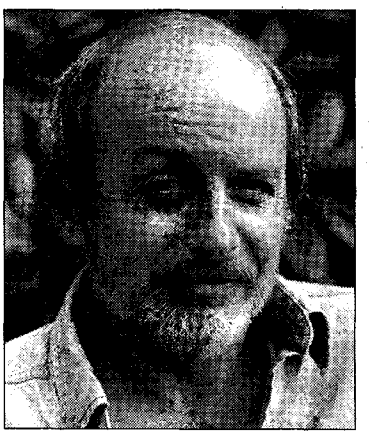

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as they come not only as the United Nations but as the nations of the world united."

The current President, however, uses the word "I" far more often than the word "we," and usually refers only to the United States, or himself and his party, not the entire world community, when he says "we." This President also tends to undercut his words of inspiration with references to dangers that loom and threaten, hovering vaguely outside our immediate sphere of control. Even as Bush promises action, he fosters a sense of chaos and danger: In his speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002, he stated, "Above all, our principles and our security are challenged today by outlaw groups and regimes that accept no law of morality and have no limit to their violent ambitions. In the attacks on America a year ago, we saw the destructive intentions of our enemies. This threat hides within many nations, including my own. In cells and camps, terrorists are plotting further destruction, and building new bases for their war against civilization. And our greatest fear is that terrorists will find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale."

Some Americans find a certain comfort in Bush's thoughts, because they feel that dominance implies moral order and establishes God's moral authority in the world. They believe there is a natural hierarchy in which those who enjoy dominance have the right to do so. Just as God has dominion over man and man has dominion over animals, the imagery of the moral order assumes a world in which people dominate those who are below them.

While many Americans feel reassured by the appearance of moral dominance, other nations, even friendly ones, do not find the President's stance reassuring. Non-Westerners tend to view dominance as imperialism. Many nations perceive the President's authoritarian imagery and mythology and are impelled to find ways to fight against American dominance. Because the world already fears US power, other nations are not comforted by Bush's leadership style. They feel only repugnance and fear. Left unchallenged, the character myth could potentially win George W. Bush four more years, but it will cost his nation dearly over a far longer period of time—perhaps stiffening resistance to American hegemony enough to end our current run of dominance.

The Democratic presidential hopefuls have begun to attack the character myth with repeated statements that Bush has lied to the American people. But the character myth is more pernicious than just lying. Often being bold, cocky and sure of yourself, and inflexibly and rigidly adhering to your principles because you are convinced you are right, can lead to catastrophic consequences. In Iraq, for example, it led to an absence of planning for any failure of our military to win a complete victory with the acceptance of a grateful Iraq. The Army consequently was unprepared for any nation-building, so that the country is now plunged into chaos and disorder, and in real danger, like Afghanistan, of becoming a permanent home for terrorists.

To be truly effective to the broader public, the Democratic candidates must present their own vivid, descriptive depiction of how they can make America safe, not merely dominant. Just as George H.W. Bush called for a New World Order and Truman had the Marshall Plan, the Democratic candidate should enunciate a new vision of a safe and secure world. He or she should show how a collaborative world is really safer than a dominating one. This is the prescription for success in 2004. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

something decent and usurp it for the promotion of a self-centered, narrow agenda." Others "thoroughly enjoyed" the "in-depth analysis" and the "respite from the week's more disturbing news stories." —*The Editors*

New York City

■ Just had to let you know how much I enjoyed "Oy Gay!" It held special appeal for me, a New York–based Jewish woman with a Jewish fiancé and several close non-Jewish gay male friends! JESSICA HONIKMAN

Sherman Oaks, Calif.

■ Hurrah for Kera Bolonik! As a straight Jewish woman, I've been keenly aware and appreciative of the positive Jewish subtext of *Will & Grace*. I'd spent years throwing things at the television every time a "new" sitcom brought out the latest rehash of *Bridget Loves Bernie*. I have no doubt that the neurotic, assimilated (dare I say, self-hating) Jewish-lite characters who populate our TV screens reflect the underdeveloped Jewish identities of the writers who created them. Thanks to the writers of *Will & Grace* for challenging the paradigm! RENA ORENSTEIN

New York City

■ *Will & Grace* is as "radical" in its depictions of gays as *Good Times* was in its depiction of African-Americans. Instead of J.J. saying "Dyn-o-mite," *W&G* has Jack screeching like a sissy/fairy. Boy, how far we've come since Stonewall. (As for Grace as a radical depiction of Jewish femininity—if it is radical to embody the stereotype of a Jewish American Princess: cannot cook, materialistic, not as polished as the goy girls but can laugh at herself, then Grace is radical.) I have not worked, marched, protested and stood up for gay rights so that people can call themselves liberal for watching the gay equivalent of *Amos 'n' Andy*. JULIAN MILLER

Seattle

■ The only way Will and Jack could *possibly* be more stereotypical gay men would be for one to be a drag queen and the other a leather daddy (or Catholic priest). As a gay man of about Will's age, income and social position, I tell you from the heart that this character is as insulting as he is ignorant about the gay experience. Yes, the show brings the topic of homos into homes across America, but at a cost: It reduces the chance of any gay man to be taken seriously, reduces the chance that any random person I meet will think I behave like an adult or have adult relationships and responsibilities, and reduces any chance of reaching a state of equality in this country. DAVID M. WHITE

Watertown, Mass.

■ Jack is mindless, obsessed with Cher, sex and dance clubs. Will is uptight, superclean and obsessed with dance clubs. If these are not gay stereotypes, I don't know what is. But the real problem is that the gay characters can't be sexual. When I see Will in bed with a man, without a shirt, then I'll agree the show is revolutionary. And sure, it depicted a Jewish wedding, but if being first equals quality, we'd all be clamoring to rent *The Munsters*—first to show a husband and wife in the same bed. DAVID HAMMER

5-LETTER WORD MEANING 'WRITER'

Culver City, Calif.

■ Finally there's proof that my favorite *Nation* columnist has achieved the celebrity she deserves. In the *Newsday* crossword for November 16, set by Nancy Salomon, the clue for *83 down* is "Writer Pollitt." The answer is "Katha." FRANK SILVEY

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

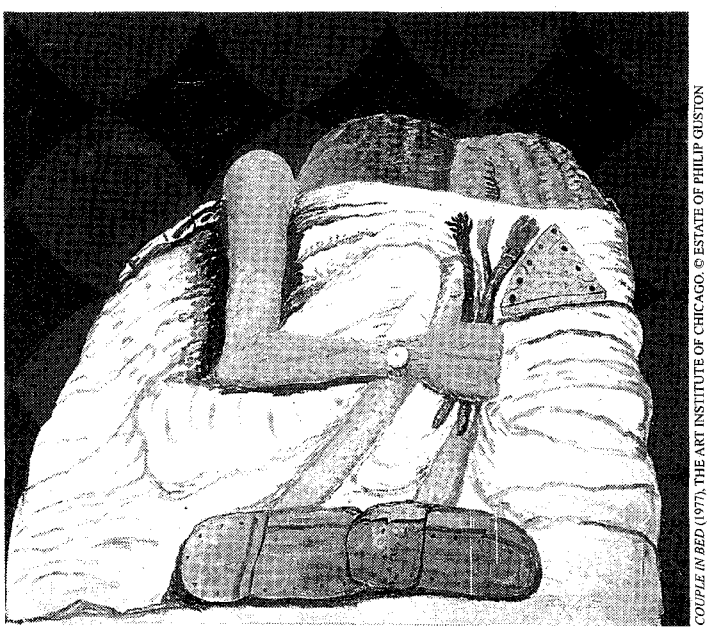
The Abstract Impressionist

ARTHUR C. DANTO

PHILIP GUSTON

I have always marveled at the way in which Abstract Expressionism was able to transform a disparate group of painters, none of whom had shown any particular promise of artistic greatness, into figures of stunning originality. It was as if the movement opened up possibilities for paint never before exploited, and the artists were lifted by what they discovered onto an entirely new plane of expression. It was a convulsive moment in the history of art, and by the time it was finished, not only was there a new pantheon of artistic heroes but a reconfiguration of the entire complex of practices that defined painting. The Abstract Expressionist canvas had become what Robert Motherwell characterized as "plastic, mysterious, and sublime." There was even a new style of talking—impulsive, confessional, oracular and grandiose—in which artists attempted to re-enact, on the verbal level, what was taking place on the surface of their canvases. Words like "The Absolute," not to mention "Nothingness," "Anxiety," "Dread" and "Despair," rose like speech balloons through the smoke-filled air of the Cedar Bar and the Artist's Club on Eighth Street.

As tightknit as the movement was, Philip Guston was, even then, a figure apart. When he turned to abstraction in the early 1950s, he had achieved considerably greater recognition as an artist than any of his peers. He had won the Prix de Rome in 1948 and, four years earlier, the first prize in "Painting in the United States," an exhibit sponsored by the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, for a painting called *Sentimental Moment*, a study of a young woman caught in an introspective mood, holding a locket. That painting made him famous, and was widely reproduced. And when Guston did go abstract, his distinctive abstract style differed from that of any of his peers more widely than any of them differed from one another. His way of laying down paint was not fluid and urgent, like Pollock. It was not slashed and brushy, like de Kooning, or sweeping and calligraphic, like Kline. It did not float translucently, like Rothko. Guston's strokes fell like short, clustered dabs of pigment into nests and networks of closely harmonized hues, which resembled passages in Impressionist landscapes. The question was even raised whether it was expressionist at all—whether Guston had not originated instead a form of Abstract Impressionism. The distance between what Guston had been, and what he became through Abstract Expressionism, was thus shorter than that traversed by any of the others. There was a certain shimmering quality, a master's touch, that, if my memory serves me well, *Sentimental Moment* shared with his great abstractions of the early 1950s.



COUPLE IN BED (1977). THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO. © ESTATE OF PHILIP GUSTON

I have to confess that I had been profoundly affected by *Sentimental Moment* when I first came across it as a young man; and for a time I kept a picture of it pinned to my wall like an icon, though I never saw the painting itself. So I was disappointed that it was not included in the retrospective exhibition of Guston's work at New York's

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Metropolitan Museum of Art (until January 4, 2004), even if it is easy enough to understand why. It really was a sentimental painting, which does not quite go with the edgy image of Guston that the show seeks to project. And beyond that, a retrospective aspires to be a narrative rather than a chronicle of an artist's life, so far as this is attainable. With that narrative, considerations of whether a piece or even a body of work fits with the story one wants to tell govern one's choice of what to show. The great dramatic moment of Guston's career was his return to figuration in the late 1960s, and the debacle exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in 1970. But the figuration to which he returned was at least as dissonant with that of *Sentimental Moment* as with the vibrant abstractions. So *Sentimental Moment* was in effect twice repudiated by the artist himself. It would be difficult to imagine a more shocking juxtaposition than setting that soulful young woman, in her nuanced pink blouse, in a roomful of the raucous cartoons through which Guston shocked the sensibilities of the art world in 1970.

One of the great Abstract Expressionists, Guston came to see abstract art as, in his words, 'an escape from the true feelings we have.'

Becoming an abstract painter was not, so far as I can tell, a momentous choice for Guston in the 1950s. He was part of a New York art world in which it was a natural next move for a gifted and ambitious artist; and the particular style that suited Guston drew upon his personal interests in East Asian philosophy. Along with John Cage and the composer Morton Feldman (of whom there is a remarkable portrait in the Metropolitan show), he attended Dr. Suzuki's lectures on Zen Buddhism at Columbia, and he evolved his abstract forms out of the calligraphic doodles he made with quill pen and ink. "My greatest ideal is Chinese painting," he wrote in 1978, "especially Sung painting dating from the tenth or eleventh century." There is a Sung feeling in the quivering abstractions of the 1950s, as if of natural forms shrouded in mist. The decision to abandon abstraction in the late 1960s was of another order altogether, and it went completely against the grain of Guston's art world. Figuration was bad enough, but to paint in the coarse comic-strip style that Guston appropriated for his 1970 show was more than bedding down with the enemy. It was seen as a betrayal of the values of high art with which the New York School identified itself. It was an aesthetic scandal.

True, Abstract Expressionism was petering out as a movement. And there was an exciting alternative to it in Pop Art, which challenged the distinction between high and low art, borrowing its images from advertisements and the comics. But no one would have expected a prince of contemporary abstraction to cross over into a style that even the enthusiasts for Pop would have found raw and smeary, like something splashed on the side of a subway car. The images of Pop belonged to the vocabulary of commercial art. They were sharp and clear and attractive. Guston's belonged to the vocabulary of delinquency. They really were expressions of contempt and rebellion toward what his peers regarded as holy. "Abstract art," he wrote in a notebook at the time, "is an escape from the true feelings we have, from the 'raw' primitive feelings about the world—and us in it."

Guston's transit from abstraction to cartoon was cruelly portrayed by Hilton Kramer in a widely cited review as a passage from "mandarin" to "stumblebum." The term "mandarin" was intended to diminish what had set Guston apart as an abstractionist. The paintings were too dainty, too delicate, too light and airy by contrast with the heavy pigment of the true expressionist to be considered authentic. The new paintings were then seen as an opportunistic bid for that missed authenticity. They were coarse, juvenile and demotic.

I sometimes wonder if Guston himself did not see his previous achievements as "mandarin." The new work was deliberately bad painting, and to this day I am not sure that anyone understands what motivated him to abuse what passed for good taste, both in substance and in style, in what he had to have known would be perceived as an act of aesthetic aggression. Only someone able to paint as exquisitely as Guston could will to paint like a "stumblebum," which falls under a distinction of the kind Plato canvassed in *Lesser Hippias*. So it was a kind of reverse—or perverse—mandarinism. He once quoted a speech that Isaac Babel, one of the writers he admired most, gave to the Soviet Writers Union in 1934. Babel said: A very important privilege, comrades, has been taken away from you. That of writing badly. Guston added: Doesn't anyone want to paint badly? It was as if he were reclaiming a forfeited privilege in 1970. The freedom to throw aesthetics to the wind. The only painter to recognize this at the Marlborough opening was de Kooning. For the rest of the art world, it was, Guston said, "as though I had left the Church: I was excommunicated for a while."

In any case, it was not simply a matter of reclaiming the right to produce images. Nor was it, I think, an oblique way of protesting the Vietnam War, though he was troubled by "the brutality of the world" and though his images expressed a concern with political evil, particularly the broadly rendered Ku Klux Klan figures, tooting through empty urban streets like Mutt and Jeff in open jalopies, wearing patched hoods, carrying spiked two-by-fours. Guston had, in fact, painted Klan figures in the 1930s, when he was a teenage labor activist involved in a strike. The Klan had been used by the police as strikebreakers, and they even removed Guston's paintings from a show he held in a bookstore. One of these paintings, *Drawing for Conspirators*, is in the Metropolitan show, and one can understand its presence there: It contributes to an image of a politically engaged artist, as does the scary painting of Richard Nixon with a swollen leg in a painting Guston did in 1975, *San Clemente*. That work goes with the brilliant series of Guston's Nixon caricatures that were assembled by Debra Bricker-Balken in her book *Poor Richard* and exhibited at the David McKee Gallery in September of 2001. These demonstrate the way a great painter can create powerful images by "painting badly."

But the Klan figures of 1970 were allegorical self-portraits. "I perceive myself as being behind a hood.... The idea of evil fascinated me, and rather like Isaac Babel, who had joined the Cossacks, lived with them and written stories about them, I almost tried to imagine that I was living with the Klan. What would it be like to be evil? To plan and plot?" Kramer's review was illustrated with *The Studio*, in which a Klan figure is executing a self-portrait, holding a brush in one hand and a stogie in the other, looking at his picture of himself through eye-slits in his hood. The room is lit with a bare bulb, a clock with one hand hangs on the wall. Like all the Klan paintings, it is an exercise in moral as well as artistic transvestism. Only a good man could wonder what it was like to be evil, just as only a good painter could paint badly on purpose. But there was something deeply satisfying in this new style, and Guston made it his own for the remainder of his life. It turned out to be the ideal means to

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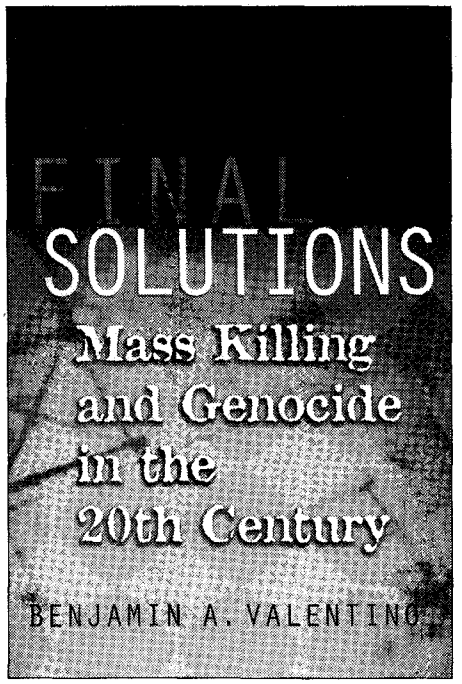
paint what concerned him as a man. The great comic-strip artists had evolved a vocabulary for treating things everybody knew about in ways that everybody could understand.

Interestingly, something like the transit from mandarin to stumblebum was enacted by Andy Warhol a decade earlier. Warhol's early art, apart from his commercial work, at which he was singularly successful, embodied the aesthetics of swish valentines. He did cute tinted drawings of pussycats, cupids, flowers and ladies' boots, with texts in a kind of ornamental handwriting. For private consumption, he did drawings of very pretty boys with good-looking cocks. And then, for reasons that have never been explained, he began, in 1960, to make his own the kind of boilerplate advertising images that everyone in the culture is familiar with. They were vernacular, familiar and anonymous, drawn from the back pages of blue-collar newspapers, the inside covers of sensationalist tabloids, pulp comics, fan magazines, junk mail, publicity glossies and throwaway advertisements. In 1961, it would have been almost impossible to believe one was looking at art when one saw them. His first show was in April of that year, in the 57th Street windows of Bonwit Teller. One of the works was called *Advertisement*, a montage of black-and-white newspaper ads: for hair tinting, for acquiring strong arms and broad shoulders, for nose reshaping, for prosthetic aids for rupture and for ("No Finer Drink") Pepsi-Cola. Bonwit's window also included *Before and After*, advertising the nose you are ashamed of transformed into the nose of your dreams. The remaining paintings are of Superman, the Little King (on an easel) and Popeye. Displayed with the frocks the store was carrying that season, the images would have been thought clever background by such passers-by as noticed them.

Abstract Expressionism revolutionized painting, but what Guston and Warhol did revolutionized art. Their transits were part of a migration of artists that began in the 1960s to cross the bridge that separated art and life. It is one thing to aspire to the sublime. It is another to bring into art the preoccupations of a man with ordinary appetites, who worries about love and eating too much, and how to give up smoking, and not just about being evil but being bad. I love Guston's *Painter's Table* of 1973. There is the ubiquitous bare light bulb—the window with the green window shade tells us that it is night. Smoke rises from a lit cigarette at the edge of the table.



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One cannot tell if something is a dish with paint tubes or an ashtray with crushed-out butts. There are a few books and some old shoes, soles up. Are the old-fashioned flatirons improvised paperweights? There is a red painting on the table of a single eye in profile, surely the artist's own. Are the two spikes leftovers from the Ku Klux Klan paintings?

In a painting that one assumes is the head of Guston's wife with big eyes, peers up over the edge of an ambiguous blue shape—is it the edge of a table? Or a blanket? Or the sea? It carries the exceedingly sentimental title *Source*. The painting could be *Sentimental Moment* in the style of the 1970s, when Guston did a number of exceedingly intimate paintings, alluding to his marriage and to his concern over his wife's health. *Couple in Bed* is a marriage portrait with a sick wife. The artist brings his brushes into bed with him, and sleeps with his shoes and wristwatch on. Nothing matches the tenderness of the final small paintings of domestic objects, through which he celebrates the intimacy of the household in a way that bears comparison with Chardin. An artist who leaves us with a painting of a thick salami and cheese sandwich on seeded rye as one of his last works cannot be reduced to a single narrative theme, political or poetic. It wouldn't have hurt to have had *Sentimental Moment* in the mixture. He was a sentimental man, somewhat given to self-pity, to worry and gluttony, plagued by weakness of will and the need for love, and his last great *oeuvre*, like Joyce's *Ulysses*, monumentalizes the wry comedy of everyday feelings. ■

Weapons of the Weak

GEORGE M. FREDRICKSON

A NATION UNDER OUR FEET: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration. By Steven Hahn. Harvard. 610 pp. $35.

African-American history, broadly defined, continues to be the most innovative and exciting field in American historical studies. The great upheaval of the nineteenth century, which saw millions of slaves becoming free as the result of a cataclysmic civil war and then struggling for decades to maintain and enhance that status against fierce white-supremacist opposition, has attracted the interest of many talented historians. Once thought to have been handed their freedom by benevolent whites, especially Abraham Lincoln, African-Americans are now generally viewed as the primary agents of their own emancipation. Had blacks not deserted the plantations and offered themselves en masse to the Union forces, it is quite conceivable that the Civil War would have ended with slavery still in place or, at best, in the process of very gradual elimination.

Steven Hahn's *A Nation Under Our Feet* is the most comprehensive account yet of black politics in the rural South before, during and after the Civil War. Whereas most previous work has focused either on the slave experience or on post-Emancipation struggles, Hahn's book encompasses both and shows the continuities between how blacks fought for self-determination in the two periods. To do this, of course, he must take an expansive view of politics, since slaves had no formal legal or political rights to speak of and were forbidden to organize themselves politically. For Hahn, all efforts by slaves to secure better living conditions and some communal autonomy—whatever the means—qualify as political action. Manifestations of the slaves' will to resist include wresting from the master the right to live in self-selected family units, have a garden plot, own and bequeath personal property, engage in petty trade and worship God in their own way.

Following the lead of earlier social historians, especially the late Herbert Gutman, Hahn finds that the strength and vitality of the slave community was derived primarily from a powerful sense of kinship or extended family that often went beyond actual blood ties. If American culture in general was highly individualistic, the black culture emerging from the slave experience was deeply rooted in closely knit families and interdependent, face-to-face communities. Hahn focuses on rural areas rather than cities, because it was there that a grassroots political ethos, based on what might be described as a kind of peasant communalism, came to full flower in the post-Emancipation era.

This is a difficult book to summarize, because it is so richly detailed and anecdotal. It draws directly on the recorded personal experiences of hundreds of rural African-Americans between the era of slavery and the Great Migration to the North in the early twentieth century. Based on prodigious research in primary sources, *A Nation Under Our Feet* is one of the most important works in American social history to appear in recent years. The emphasis throughout is on how the kinship networks and folk culture of ordinary rural blacks helped them to resist the determined efforts of white supremacists to nullify the rights of citizenship supposedly sanctioned by the postwar constitutional amendments and to subject blacks to new forms of economic exploitation.

After making a decisive contribution to the salvation of the Union and to their own emancipation through their service on the Northern side in the Civil War, rural Southern blacks fully expected to be rewarded with access to the land they had worked for so long without pay. Hahn provides a graphic account of the "Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865"—a time when many blacks believed that the government was about to redistribute the land and many whites feared that the former slaves were going to rise up and seize it by force. A practical consequence was that most blacks delayed signing agricultural labor contracts for 1866 and thereby got better terms than if they had not held off in the hope of obtaining land of their own. More important, Hahn maintains, the disordered state of the Southern countryside at the end of 1865, especially the widespread violence perpetrated on blacks because of their refusal to conform to the demands and expectations of white landowners, was a condition for the coming of Radical Reconstruction. If rural blacks had docilely accepted the quasi slavery that their former masters tried to impose on them, Northern Congressional Radicals would have been less inclined to challenge President Andrew Johnson's lenient Reconstruction policy and eventually seize control of the process. Hahn's point is hard to deny, although his relentlessly rural focus has its limitations. It prevents him from giving due weight to the possibly decisive effect on Northern public opinion of the bloody urban riots in New Orleans and Memphis in the spring and summer of 1866, which mostly involved white attacks on defenseless blacks.

Republicans were able to gain political

George M. Fredrickson is a professor emeritus of history at Stanford University. His most recent book is Racism: A Short History *(Princeton).*

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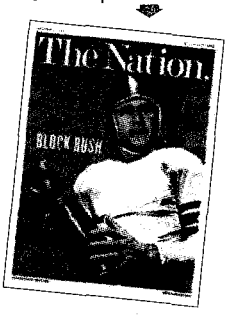

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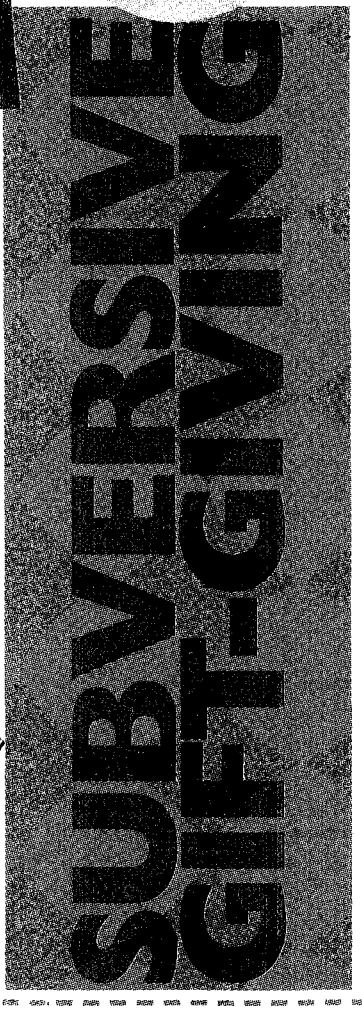

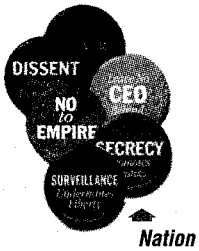

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control of most Southern states in 1867–68 primarily because of the grassroots mobilization carried out by the Union League. Hahn presents much evidence to show that the establishment of league chapters, usually portrayed as the work of Northern carpetbaggers and Freedmen's Bureau officers, was more often the product of local, community-based black initiatives and that women as well as men were instrumental in the growth of this remarkable political organization. The white supremacist answer to the Union League was the Ku Klux Klan and similar secret organizations designed to terrorize blacks who sought to vote and hold office. The politics of Reconstruction thus became a conflict of organized groups willing to resort to violence and intimidation. In describing this "paramilitary politics," Hahn refutes the traditional image of blacks as passive victims of white terror. Realizing what kind of struggle they were in, the black Union Leaguers and Republicans frequently used force or the threat of force to keep their own members in line. When the Klan of the period 1868–72 or the unmasked paramilitary groups that emerged later in Reconstruction attempted to disrupt their meetings, blacks frequently fought back, striking counterblows or returning fire.

The extent and intensity of black political mobilization during Reconstruction was extraordinary but not surprising in light of the communal solidarity and cohesiveness that Hahn believes was a legacy of the slave experience. Radical Reconstruction failed to lay a firm foundation for black equality and citizenship, Hahn contends, mainly because of the paucity and unreliability of white Republicans. Whether carpetbaggers or scalawags, the whites who supported the Republican Party in the South and filled more than their share of its elective offices had an agenda different from that of the black rank and file. Economic modernization along capitalist lines, not land redistribution, was their main objective, and most of them harbored racial prejudices that prevented them from regarding blacks as their social equals. The Republican Party, moreover, was becoming the national party of big business and middle-class conservatism, which did not jibe with attempts during the latter stages of Reconstruction to organize black farm workers and sharecroppers into unions capable of striking against large planters.

Among the major themes of Hahn's book is the failure of biracial politics both during and after Reconstruction. Since blacks were a numerical majority in only three Southern states—South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana—they could not generally exercise power without significant white support. Where whites were a substantial majority blacks had little or no influence on Republican politics. Where something close to parity existed, blacks received a proportion of the offices, especially on the local level in areas where they predominated, but the top offices and most of the power remained in white hands. Only in the black-majority states did they eventually come close to having a fair share of major offices, but as soon as that happened white support for the Republicans melted away.

The possibility of biracial politics did not completely end with the overthrow of the last Republican regimes in 1875–76. Hahn shows that despite harassment and new suffrage restrictions, large numbers of blacks continued to vote in some areas until the turn of the century and even elected a few Congressmen. Dissatisfied with conservative regimes that reflected only the interests of wealthy merchants and large planters, some spokesmen for relatively disadvantaged whites tried to appeal to black voters on the basis of common economic interests.

The most successful effort to achieve a biracial electoral coalition was the independent "Readjuster" movement that controlled Virginia from 1879 to 1883. Blacks received far more recognition and benefits from the Readjusters than they would a decade later from the Populists. (Hahn attributes this anomaly to the fact that Virginia was unique among Southern states in never having elected a Republican government, which meant that the earlier Union League and black Republican organizations on the local level had not been disabled by massive violence from the Klan and other white paramilitary organizations and could still be tapped for electoral purposes.) Contrary to much of the historical literature, the Populist Party of the 1890s neither attracted nor deserved much support from blacks; it offered them scarcely anything and included in its ranks many men who had been paramilitary white supremacists. At times, it also manifested a blatant racism in its rhetoric and ready acceptance of the new Jim Crow laws. If anything remains of the once-dominant view that Populism was a genuinely biracial and egalitarian movement, Hahn may have dealt it a lethal blow.

The inability of blacks to find white coalition partners in the face of increasing oppression and exploitation in the late nineteenth century helps to explain the recurring emigration movements to which Hahn devotes considerable attention. Whether the destination was Liberia or Kansas, the

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impulse was the same—to escape from increasingly intolerable circumstances. Not surprisingly, it was the areas in which Reconstruction had ended most violently that saw the greatest interest in organized exodus from the South. Relatively small numbers actually left the region before 1900, but the widespread interest in migration reflected a popular nationalism that also manifested itself in other ways.

In the introduction, Hahn describes himself as rejecting the standard "liberal integrationist" paradigm for understanding nineteenth-century black history and suggests that he will adopt a nationalist perspective. Although he pays some attention to black religion and notes the affinity between African forms of worship and the American Baptist style that blacks found congenial, the nationalism he describes is not the Afrocentric cultural nationalism that has been presented since the 1970s as the main separatist alternative to liberal interracialism. Hahn's touchstone for black nationalism is the Garvey movement of the 1920s, which justified black separatism primarily on the grounds that white racism is ineradicable and egalitarian biracialism is therefore impossible. Hahn concludes his book by drawing attention to the surprising fact that Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association had more chapters in the rural South than anywhere else. This rural Garveyism, he argues, was a survival of the nineteenth-century folk nationalism that he has been writing about.

"Racism" is not a term or a concept that appears often in the book, but toward the end Hahn attributes the attraction of Garveyism to blacks from a Southern rural background (and the NAACP's lack of appeal) to the fact that "they had been hardened to the pervasiveness of white racism and had no illusions about the prospects of integration." He also notes that the nationalist tradition in general has recognized "the centrality of race and racism as markers of experience in American society." It would not be accurate to conclude from such statements that this rural folk nationalism was simply reactive and defensive. The need to go it alone resulted in some substantial achievements that went well beyond psychic compensation. Not only was a sense of group identity and peoplehood firmly established but also a dense fabric of communal organizations and institutions was created in the rural South after Reconstruction. Most remarkable was the surprising increase between 1870 and 1900 of the number of black farmers who owned their own land, although usually in small parcels. Hahn's story is one of achievement in the face of adversity rather than of victimization.

From the evidence that Hahn presents of the almost universal refusal of whites to treat blacks as political equals and fellow citizens, one might readily conclude that the disenfranchisement of Southern blacks around the turn of the century was simply another manifestation of the deeply rooted and "pervasive" white racism that had long conditioned the Southern black experience. But at this point Hahn reverts to a class analysis and describes the disenfranchisement movement as "the capstone of a lengthy offensive by which white employers and property owners attempted to construct a postemancipation regime of domination and subordination." Exploitative economic interests undoubtedly influenced elite political behavior, but how does one explain the apparently enthusiastic support for such policies from whites who were neither employers nor substantial property owners? There is massive evidence in the book of such interclass white solidarity, but it is not analyzed or explained. Unless we resort to the tired and generally discredited Marxist concept of "false consciousness," we

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Ruy Teixeira

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will need a better understanding of white identities and mentalities before we can fully appreciate the dynamics of race and class in the nineteenth-century South. In addition to a political economy of class relations, we need to think in terms of the psychology and culture of racial hierarchy. But whatever one concludes about Hahn's underlying assumptions and conceptual boundaries, this book remains a major achievement and a landmark in African-American history. ■

Scully's Way

THOMAS BENDER

MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Vincent Scully, selected and with introductions by Neil Levine. Princeton. 399 pp. $45.

Generations of Yale students share stories about special moments in Vincent Scully's courses on art and architecture. Scully's wide-ranging knowledge counted, but it was the presentation that made the difference. Scully was a charismatic figure on the stage; his focus and passion made him a memorable classroom and public lecturer. No doubt it was the drama that prompted *Time* magazine to name him one of the ten "Great Teachers" in the United States in 1966. The first story I heard—now long ago—about Scully came from a political science major who was in one of Scully's classes in the mid-1960s. He described how in one lecture Scully spontaneously responded to the image projected on the screen, seeing something new in what was to him a familiar image. As Scully described his new insight, he became so absorbed in his dialogue with the image and with the class that he stepped back to the edge of the stage and fell off. But he did not stop talking. He finished his point and then resumed the lecture back on the stage. Was it true? My friend insisted it was. Is it important that my friend did not tell me the work of art at issue? Perhaps. Is it relevant that my friend acquired from Scully a life-long interest in architecture? Of course.

His lectures were rhetorical, emotive and connotative. He did not marshal evidence in the usual academic way; he inclined toward an intuitive and declarative style, and it was often difficult to grasp the evidential links in the transit from projected image to the meaning he proposed. But if some students were not quite sure how it was done, they came away with an expansive and humanistic appreciation of architecture.

Undergraduates were not, however, Scully's only audience at Yale. A large number of the architecture students who came in contact with him found inspiration and guidance into the central issues of modern architecture theory and practice. Among them were some of the most important architects practicing today, including Robert A.M. Stern, the current dean of architecture at Yale, to say nothing of the considerable number of architecture writers spawned in his classes. This collection of Scully's essays invites a larger audience into that extended conversation.

Scully's approach to architecture emphasized what he called "visual empiricism." He translated his experience of a site or building into words. It was a subjective approach, yet he often presumed that his experience—and his interpretation of that experience—was universal. It comes as no surprise that he was early influenced by Carl Jung, and he expected to find universal archetypes in human form-making. Over time, his understanding of archetypes moved away from Jung's ahistorical universalism to historically specific precedents, though a rhetorical tendency toward universal claims remained. He also emphasized the importance of empathy to understanding the experience of a building. This method was manifested on the printed page by fluent prose and warm sympathy. Often, however, the visual evidence Scully presented was neither supported by archeological or textual evidence, nor did it seem to express quite so much as he claimed. His most famous book, *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture* (1962), revealed, at least to some, the perils of Scully's subjectivity, and it received rather rough treatment from classicists, one of whom referred to its "mystical approach."

While Scully is not likely to be remembered as one of the great architectural historians, he may find a place among the gallery of distinguished American critics—like Montgomery Schuyler, Lewis Mumford and Ada Louise Huxtable—for his historically grounded but engaged architectural criticism. That possibility is enhanced by the well-chosen essays in this volume. Not only did Neil Levine, professor of architectural history at Harvard, make an excellent selection, he also provided a brief but illuminating biographical essay tracing Scully's career. Better yet, the headnotes he has written for each of Scully's essays are themselves gemlike mini-essays. Since the pieces here reprinted were mostly written for special occasions, Levine identifies the significance of each occasion and the place of the essay in the context of architecture culture and in relation to Scully's developing ideas.

In the range of his interests, his commitment to the value of history, his interest in the relation of landscape and building, his discomfort with the purist ideology of Modernism, his appreciation of the romantic sensibility and, indeed, his predilection toward moralism and rhetorical excess, Scully shares much with Mumford, who also found a large audience among architects and the general public. As with Mumford, this combination of concerns produced by the 1960s a growing unease with the direction of Modernism.

Yet Scully's breadth is paired with a peculiar hermeticism. His essays and Levine's contextualizing take note of a rather small number of individuals and movements as subjects or as relevant context. One does not get much sense of the increasingly heterogeneous and eclectic world of architecture over the course of the past half-century. The so-called New York Five (of whom Peter Eisenman and Richard Meier are today perhaps the most widely known) appear briefly, but other subsequent avant-garde movements and theorists do not. Even Frank Gehry is not mentioned until Bilbao. No Chicago architect after Sullivan and Wright is considered. The parallel concerns of Mumford and, to a lesser extent, Jane Jacobs, are not addressed. Nor are those of Huxtable, his contemporary and architecture's most important public voice in their generation. Whether this apparent parochialism reflects the limits of Scully's work or the accident of selection, a larger framing is warranted.

Scully's core concern in these essays is the experience we identify as modern and how that experience finds appropriate expression in the architecture of the mod-

Thomas Bender teaches history at NYU. His most recent book is The Unfinished City: New York and the Metropolitan Idea *(New Press).*

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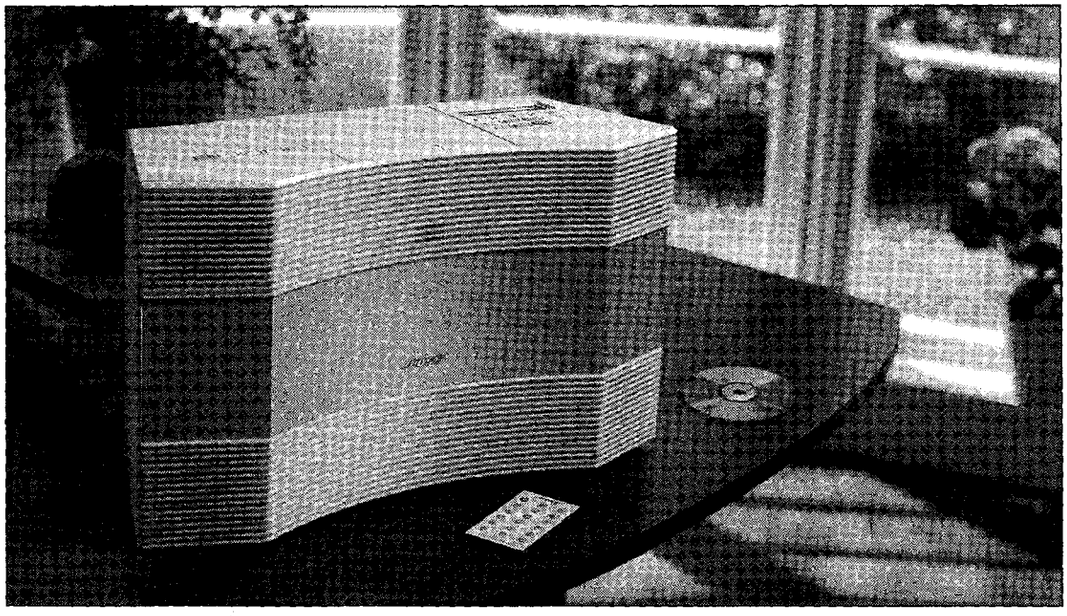

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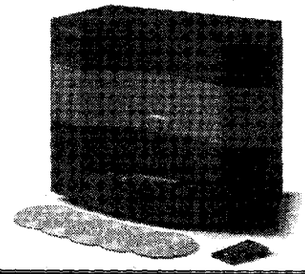

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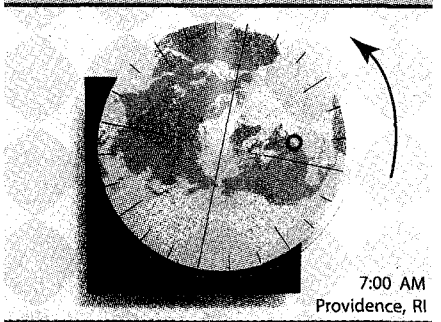

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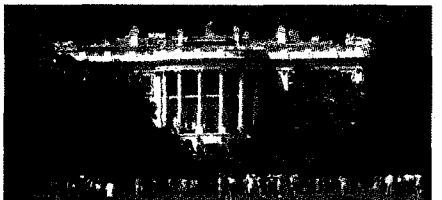
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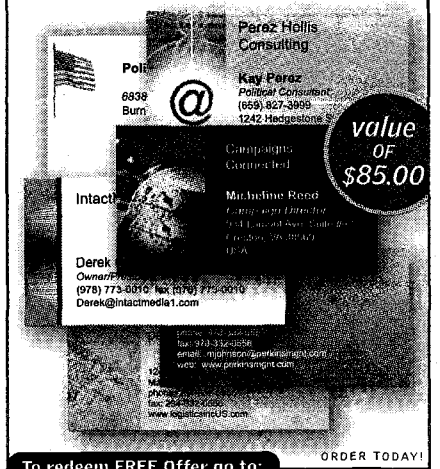

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ern era. To phrase the issue this way is to make an important point: He locates himself within the domain of the modern, not within the Modernist movement. His is the broader terrain, and it provides a position from which he can examine the Modernist movement without becoming trapped in its teleology. It has been said—accurately—that he has put distance between himself and Modernism since his defense of Modernism against Norman Mailer's 1963 assault. But it is not until his embrace of the New Urbanism in the 1990s that he might fairly be tagged an outright opponent, as distinct from an internal critic.

By Modernist movement, Scully meant the International Style. It was so named in an exhibit organized by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, later to be Scully's dissertation adviser, and Philip Johnson at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932. It was probably the most influential architectural exhibit ever mounted. Heavily influenced by the German Bauhaus, it defined Modernism quite specifically, even narrowly, celebrating industrial materials and methods and demanding purity of form. (In this regard, it was not much different from Clement Greenberg's slightly later program for painting or that of the New Critics for literature.) Frank Lloyd Wright was one of only four Americans in the exhibit, but he had been characterized by Hitchcock as a nineteenth-century architect and thus reduced to a precursor to the Modernists celebrated in the exhibition. Only a few years later Hitchcock would revise this judgment, but in *The International Style* (1932), the book that accompanied the show, Hitchcock and Johnson disparaged Wright as a "Romantic individualist." It was Wright's deviation and distinctiveness, however, that drew Scully to him and sustained his effort to define a more expansive Modernism.

Later, Johnson—as predictable as a jack-in-the-box—would change directions and become an ally of Scully in the critique of the Modernism he had himself done so much to promote. Kahn and Venturi were more important than Johnson. In their very different ways, they provided Scully with routes to a freer Modernism, "richly complicated, leavened, and extended." He became their champions, in part because they were "gentle" revolutionaries, while the heroic "International Style" and its advocates were "more than a little totalitarian." His hostility to the European-dominated movement and praise for the outspoken and self-consciously American Wright ought not to be misunderstood as a kind of nativism. In fact, during the McCarthy era Scully defended a cosmopolitan vision of architectural culture, publicly taking Wright to task for succumbing to anti-foreign and anticommunist rhetoric.

Modern Architecture and Other Essays addresses *inter alia* many issues, but the recurring themes are three, and all are matters of continuing concern in American architectural culture and public discussion. First, there is the question of history and its place in modern architecture. That issue points to the second. What is the relation of Modernism and postmodernism? The third issue is larger than architecture—the condition of American cities. Scully approaches this issue through a consideration of the New Urbanism movement, a development in architecture that often blurs the line between the recuperation of historical forms and indulging nostalgia.

The International Style rejected historical styles and the eclecticism of the nineteenth century for forms that utilized and honestly expressed the materials and technologies of modern life. In addition, it declared the irrelevance of history. Modern life and its needs would generate new forms. But in fact, the first generation of Modernists could not dispense with the history they already knew. Who can miss the fundamental role of classicism in the work of Mies van der Rohe? Compare his New National Gallery in what was West Berlin with Karl Friedrich Schinkel's extraordinary nineteenth-century Greek revival museum east of the Brandenburg Gate. Differences in style notwithstanding, both of these buildings are brilliantly conceived on classical premises.

But the ideology of Modernism insisted, and continues to insist, on its escape from history. Only the the avant-garde rejection of history no longer derives from revolutionary confidence, but from fear of the weight of history. History and invention are treated as mutually exclusive. For Bernard Tschumi, a leading avant-gardist who recently stepped down as dean of Columbia's architecture school, history threatens originality. In fact, as Scully argues, invention depends upon history. In his essay on Louis Kahn, whose originality is without doubt, he makes the case with care and detail. Kahn's visits to Egypt's pyramids, the towers of San Gimignano and Roman vaults formed the historical ground of his remarkable innovation in the Trenton Bath House, the Richards Medical Research Building, the Kimbell Art Museum. Creativity flows out of a conversation with the past about present needs and conditions. Kahn regarded historical buildings as "friends rather than enemies." For Kahn, Scully

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writes, the mind, when faced with an architectural program, "selects from the forms it has already stored away the one which seems to suit the situation best. Then, through Design, the architect bombards that chosen Form with the particulars of the program until it deforms in response to them. If, however, the original Form was the right one, the whole thing, however modified by Design, will still hold together in the end."

Scully's concern and argument goes beyond cognitive processes. He argues that modern architecture depends upon both classicism (history) and the vernacular, meaning the architecture of place or context. Kahn was helpful as Scully worked through these issues, but it was younger innovators, Venturi and Aldo Rossi, the Italian neorationalist architect, who moved through the door Kahn opened. In them, one finds "the revival of the classical and vernacular traditions of architecture and their reincorporation into the mainstream of modern architecture." Here Scully is making reference to underlying principles, not the pastiche of historical styles or banal copying so often seen in so-called postmodern architecture. Too often the proponents of the contemporary avant-garde, like the critic Herbert Muschamp, uphold the dichotomy of history and creativity by building up these straw figures as warnings against history and context.

It is at this point that Robert Venturi's remarkable book, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), makes its vital contribution to architectural culture. Scully became aware of Venturi's work only in 1961, at the urging of Robert Stern, his student at the time. As with Kahn, though along a different axis, Scully saw in Venturi's early work another way to enrich and, to his mind, rescue the Modernist project. If Venturi called part of his book a "gentle manifesto," the foreword that Scully wrote for it trumpeted its significance. In effect, Venturi was asking his elders in the Modernist movement: What is the big fear? Why the barricades? Why spend so much time warding off, purifying?

Venturi, too young to have lived in a nineteenth-century bourgeois home and family, may have been unable to grasp the psychic as well as aesthetic investment in clearing out the clutter. He also rejected the tough masculinity of the Modernist movement; indeed, his later partnership with Denise Scott Brown, his wife, was a genuine collaboration, something quite rare among the heroic international Modernists. He embraced both memory and innovation. Instead of protecting purity, he welcomed inclusion, accommodation and irony. He reminded his colleagues that Modernism was grounded in a recognition of the contemporary world. He even allowed in honky-tonk elements. In a later book, *Learning From Las Vegas* (1972), he accepted the "Strip." More important, Venturi and his co-authors connected architecture with the economy of contemporary modernity, anticipating the age of the computer, the LCD screen, flexible production. But the book overdid a good point. The notoriety of the honky-tonk aspects of the second book displaced attention from the much wiser book and its more powerful ideas. Venturi's best subsequent architecture derived from the first book, not the second.

The first book promised a rescue of Modernism, and plausibly so. Scully claimed that like FDR, who saved capitalism and was then attacked by capitalists, Venturi saved Modernism and became the target of Modernists. Partly that happened, I suspect, because of developments that encouraged a different way of discussing the crisis of Modernism. Postmodernism got recognition as a movement, something marked, perhaps, by the publication of *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* (1977), by Charles Jencks, and by the slight-

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ly later "Chippendale" skyscraper Johnson designed for AT&T (now the Sony Building). The public had received news of a new direction in architecture that defined itself against Modernism, and they found themselves suddenly surrounded by postmodern buildings. Far from examples of accommodating inclusion, many of these buildings were appalling—overscaled, pseudohistorical, pastiche. Irony devolved into a bad joke. Yet these buildings were probably no worse than the all-too-pervasive overscaled and banal modern buildings of the 1960s and 1970s that still scarred the cityscape.

Scully found the ground shifting, leaving little standing room for debate within a larger Modernism. What Kahn, Venturi and Scully were pointing toward was, in Venturi's original formulation, a more inclusive Modernism, one that could contain the many threads of Modernism. There were always multiple threads in Modernism, and much that was tagged as postmodernism, and thus next in a sequence, had been there from the beginning, not only in architecture but across the arts. To some extent the modern/postmodern dichotomy derived from the truncated presentation of Modernism at the International Style exhibit. Alternative threads were ignored or marginalized. Alvar Aalto, Kahn, Wright and the threads they represented, to say nothing of the distinctive modernisms developed outside Western Europe, were pushed to the margins and made unavailable, somehow unmodern. A big-tent Modernism would have provided room for a plurality of practices and fruitful theoretical debate.

More recent developments played a role as well. Architecture became more academicized and theory-conscious, and creativity became confused with the pursuit of expressive individualism, which weakened any impulse to accommodation. Rather than building upon the "shoulders of giants," as Isaac Newton put it, contemporary academe (not architecture alone) celebrates provocation and a selfish originality effectively defined as absolute difference. It is a style that diminishes the claims of history, devalues colleagues and displaces dialogue in favor of polemic. At the extreme it resembles a cult of academic celebrity. Scully, himself something of a celebrity, continually challenged this particular logic. But in the end he too left the big tent by embracing the New Urbanism.

The past half-century has been unkind to American cities, and New Haven is far from an exception. Scully, who was a resident of New Haven from birth to retirement, leaving only for military service, watched this history unfold. When urban renewal bulldozed the historic city, he turned to historic preservation, insisting that the city's historic form and buildings could be part of the future. The turn to historic preservation ought not to be considered evidence of a turn from Modernism. Modernism needs the past if it is to represent the new. But with the city falling apart, socially and physically, more than the historic core was at issue. A new urbanism was needed, and he turned to a movement that called itself by that name.

The New Urbanism movement was international, pioneered in Europe by Léon Krier and in the United States by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, former students of Scully's who formed a partnership in Miami. Their signature work was the development of the town of Seaside, Florida. Some of the best architects in the country were invited to design buildings there, following the design guidelines devised by Duany and Plater-Zyberk. Streets were scaled to humans, not cars, and open space suggested community. The utterly predictable homogeneity of the residents made a feeling of community almost automatic. Scully strongly supported this movement, but he was not so blind to its limitations as were its founding architects. He pointed out the class basis of Seaside, and he noted the obvious: It was really suburban, not urban. In its few specifically urban iterations, the New Urbanism is surely "city lite," not the real thing.

To his credit, Scully prefers to call the work of his former students a new "Architecture of Community." While more honest as to the intention and result, this title carries its own burden. The quest for community, almost by definition, is the pursuit of sameness, a sense of we-ness. And "we" implies an excluded "them." Community also

Soul Keeping Company

The hours between washing and the well
Of burial are the soul's most troubled time.

I sat with her in keeping company
All through the affliction of the night, keeping

Soul constant, a second self. Earth is heavy
And I made no wish, save being

Merely magical. I am magical
No more. This, I well remember well.

In the sweet thereafter the impress
Of the senses will be tattooed to

The whole world ravelling in the clemency
Of an autumn of Octobers, all that bounty

Bountiful and the oaks specifically
Afire as everything dies off, inclining

To the merciful. I would have made of my
body
A body to protect her, anything to keep

Her well & here—in the soul's suite
Before five tons of earth will bear

On her, stay here
Soul, in the good night of my company.

Lucie Brock-Broido

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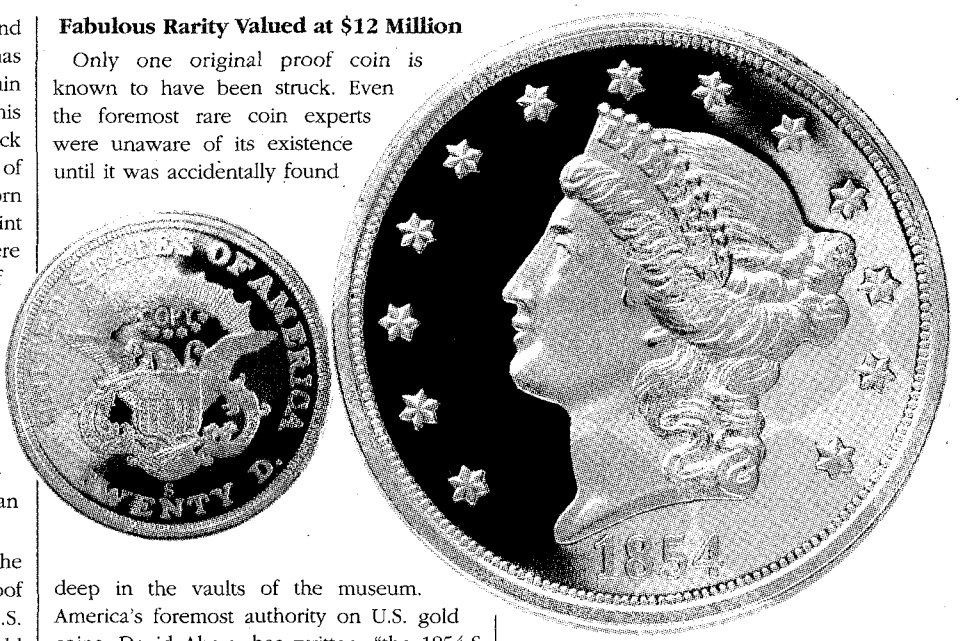

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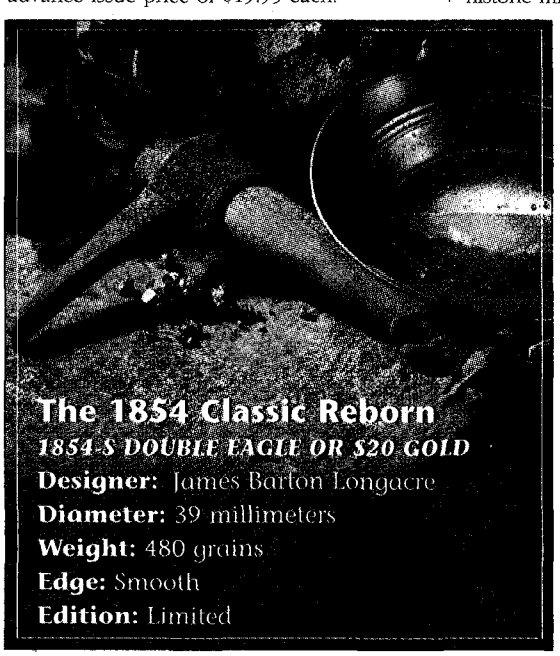

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carries the heavy baggage of nostalgia, and the New Urbanism is an unending exercise in nostalgia for the privileged. It loses touch with, indeed escapes, the experience of contemporary life in urban America. Using Scully's own wide definition of modern architecture, it is clear that the New Urbanism falls outside the tent, and Scully's embrace carried him into opposition to the Modernism he so long championed. ■

FILMS

Go East, Young Man!

STUART KLAWANS

THE LAST SAMURAI • LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE • BAD SANTA

In one of his sunnier moods, Jean-Luc Godard might have tacked onto *The Last Samurai* the subtitle *une étrange aventure de Tom Cruise*. We've seen sci-fi Tom in *Minority Report*, Venetian-masked Tom in *Eyes Wide Shut*, latex-face Tom in *Mission: Impossible*, even topknot Tom in *Magnolia*; but who would have imagined he'd turn up in East Asia in 1876, draped in a robe and miming a sword fight? In the role of Capt. Nathan Algren, a veteran of Custer's 7th Cavalry, Cruise sails to Japan as a mercenary and at a certain moment finds himself alone in a rural house, where he decides to try out the clothes and military drill he's been observing. To the credit of *The Last Samurai*, the ensuing romp recalls, just a little, the scene of teenage Tom in *Risky Business* playing air guitar in his skivvies. *The Last Samurai* knows itself to be *une étrange aventure* and is sometimes willing to be amused by it.

Mostly, though, *The Last Samurai* aims for, and achieves, epic sweep: the glory of tradition-bound warriors hurling themselves against the modern world, the grandeur of Hollywood offering two points of view on everything. Do you believe the West corrupted the rest of the world, devastating it with commercialism and machines of war? Then *The Last Samurai* is for you. It celebrates the medieval virtues of Katsumoto (Ken Watanabe), who starts out as the captor of Captain Algren but gradually becomes his leader and friend. If you're proud of America and what it's achieved, then *The Last Samurai* is for you, too. It proves that Tom Cruise is so cool, he can teach the emperor of Japan how to be Japanese. Take it seriously if you like, or think of it as just skivvies and air guitar; but either way, *The Last Samurai* knows how to please.

It begins, in fact, by distinguishing itself from less competent entertainments. When first seen, Captain Algren has been reduced to putting on Wild West shows for the Winchester rifle company. The script he's been given is pompous, the set design cheesy, the sales pitch blatant; and since Algren performs in a state of drunken disgust, the actor, too, is inept. From this introduction, we're meant to conclude that Algren hates himself for what he's done as an Indian fighter and hates the people who ignorantly hail him. But the scene might also convey a second message: that this skit for the Winchester company is unworthy of Tom Cruise. He requires a luxury vehicle, like the movie you're about to watch.

So the thunderous splendors of *The Last Samurai* unfold; and again, to the movie's credit, they're as good as advertised. What Captain Algren observes of his samurai captors might be said as well for cinematographer John Toll and production designer Lilly Kilvert: In whatever they do, they strive to be perfect. The young actress Koyuki is perfect as a stoic widow, who must put up with, and almost come to love, Captain Algren. (She's the only woman in the movie, which is one more than you get in that other boys' adventure, *Master and Commander*.) Above all, Ken Watanabe is perfect as Katsumoto, with his head like a round, sculpted stone and his voice like a rumor of earthquake. Although there's a bit of totemic nonsense about Algren and a tiger—the direction by Edward Zwick, and the script by Zwick, John Logan and Marshall Herskovitz, are not entirely perfect—it's clear to everyone, Tom Cruise included, that the real man in this movie is Watanabe. If the outward story of *The Last Samurai* concerns Algren's progress from a show-biz version of heroism to the real thing under Katsumoto's tutelage, then the inward action is about Cruise's effort to be less of a star and more of a Watanabe.

Ultimately, of course, the effort fails. Cruise must remain himself: the sole face that adorns the posters. In this requirement, and this alone, *The Last Samurai* does not try to have things both ways. It requires everyone to defer to Cruise's character, sooner or later—which is part of the reason *The Last Samurai* will rake in a lot more money than Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man*, without having a tenth of the integrity of *Dead Man*'s cross-cultural encounter.

As compromises go, this one isn't fatal. I was impressed by *The Last Samurai*. I was entertained. But except for the ever-compelling drama of Tom Cruise's overachievement, I can't say I was moved.

To my surprise, though, I recently saw a martial spectacle that did move me: the last installment in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Return of the King*.

The experience came as a surprise because the first episodes had felt like such a slog: so many lavish sets and special effects, so much high-flown doubletalk, so endless a supply of computer-enhanced battles, with nothing to interrupt these labors except the occasional exchange of yearning, sexless glances between Viggo Mortensen and this or that underemployed beauty. I showed up for *The Return of the King* out of a sense of duty—samurai warriors, please note—and left astonished, with my head and heart buzzing.

Of course the effect was achieved, in part, by beating me into submission. The challenge that director Peter Jackson has set for himself is to jump up perpetually in scale, after he's already piled Annapurna on Everest. There are always mightier armies to amass, uglier monsters to call up, vaster tracts of land to threaten with destruction; and like the hero riding in at the last moment, Jackson somehow comes through with the goods. Movies don't get any bigger than *The Return of the King*; you could tuck *The Last Samurai* into one corner and have room left over for *Intolerance*.

So I surrendered to a superior power, or perhaps superior exuberance. Jackson rejoices in making large chunks of masonry seem to whiz through the air with the camera zooming close behind; and when he invents his better stunts—such as a duel between a hobbit and a giant spider, or an elf's flying attack against an elephant—you can almost hear his giggles, beneath the audience's spontaneous applause. Ray Harryhausen himself might have envied these effects. For the movie-mad, such extrava-

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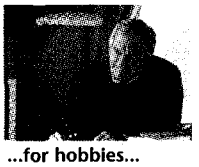
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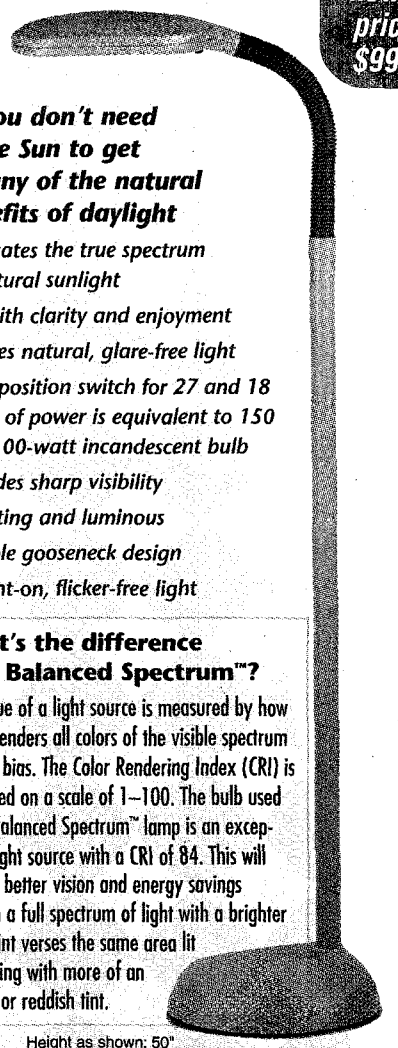
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gances will always be their own excuse. And yet, having given in to them, I discovered something beyond extravagance in *The Return of the King*. I found a few human realities amid the blare and ballyhoo.

There's a mad father, terrifying in his destructiveness; a woman warrior whose victory is worth the predictable swagger; a friend who might have turned out to be less admirable, if he'd had a bit more imagination; a hero who wins because of his humility and then can't return to his humble life. I would distinguish these figures from others in the film that are well realized as types but have no weight as people: Ian McKellen's wizard, for example, or Mortensen's uncrowned king, who strides about looking like your generic movie Jesus, only more tired and pissed off. The latter characters are satisfying. The former trouble you enough that you can care about them.

A little.

Weary of manly honor and the noble lost cause, suspicious of the battle against absolute evil, you may excuse your movie-mad columnist for enjoying *The Last Samurai* and thrilling to *The Return of the King* and yet wonder if the current movie season has anything for you. Of course it does. Pop culture is nothing if not generous, and so it's tossed up a pair of cynical, hipster comedies that deflate everything in the previous two movies. Let me recommend *The Triplets of Belleville*, a feature-length animation by Sylvain Chomet, and *Bad Santa*, a demented collaboration between director Terry Zwigoff and Billy Bob Thornton.

I suppose the theme of *The Triplets of Belleville* is the absurdity of being Québécois. The film was made, for the most part, in Montreal and exists in an imaginative zone that is ridiculously and painfully neither Paris nor New York. But, that said, the major appeal of the picture is its sense of disgust. It's about a dwarfish, goggle-eyed granny; a grotesquely fat dog; a bicycle racer with the eyes of Peter Lorre and a nose that belongs on a piece of construction equipment; three cabaret artistes who live amid garbage and play with garbage and gorge themselves on dynamited frogs; a bunch of boxlike gangsters; a red-nosed drug dealer (he pushes French wine); and a city of gluttons, where only the buildings are thin. Though inspired by the works of Jacques Tati, from whom it borrows the device of using gibble-gabble as dialogue, *The Triplets of Belleville* has none of his delight in human messiness. The chaos in this picture all but reeks from the screen. I thought it was hilarious.

But not as hilarious as *Bad Santa*, a comedy of disgust that is not so much beyond praise as indifferent to it, as it is to everything civil. The movie's one joke—which will endure for the ages—is the defamation of the Christmas spirit by Billy Bob Thornton, who stars as a drunken, chain-smoking, dirty-minded, incontinent, foul-mouthed and larcenous department-store Santa. I strain to find precedents. W.C. Fields won't do; although he celebrates the basest impulses, Fields continually musters pretenses, whereas Thornton is too abject to bother. Everyone sees he's a scandal, but nobody seems able to do anything about it. Preston Sturges doesn't qualify as a precedent, either—nobody in this picture has the vocabulary—and the *Hellzapoppin'* tradition is positively genteel compared with this stuff. The closest source I can think of is the writings of Charles Bukowski: just what you want to see spewed across the screen at the holiday season.

Like *The Return of the King*, this film, too, features an elf. He's played by Tony Cox, and he's an angry, vicious, dozens-playing dwarf. Happy holidays!

Screening Schedule: And yet, since spiritual needs don't just vanish, I also recommend *The Hidden God*, a series at The Museum of Modern Art's Gramercy Theatre in New York. The theme: movies in which the unacknowledged main character is God. The schedule, running through February 29: nothing but classics, from Rossellini's *The Flowers of St. Francis* through Harold Ramis's *Groundhog Day*. If you can't make it to the series, why not pick up the catalogue? It's got fifty essays, including a very Jewish one about Andrei Rublev, by me. ■

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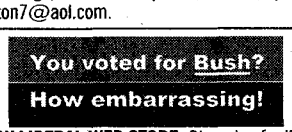

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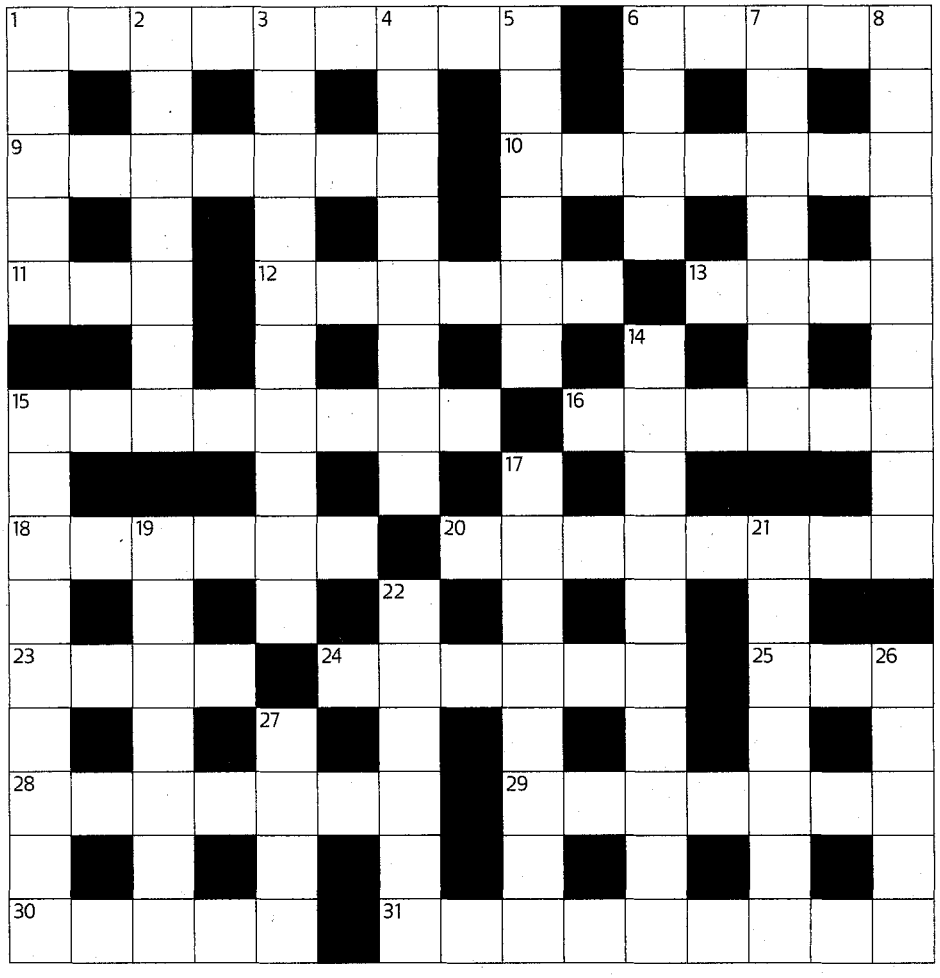

ACROSS

1 and **6** across Baby clothes? (9,5)

9 Red and Dead—both confused—which has to be feared. (7)

10 Not a place, really—but it seems to be at this place, at present. (7)

11 Supposedly a pleasant place where ale is brewed. (3)

12 Tended to be obeyed. (6)

13 Acts like the kind of people Peter Rabbit might be interested in. (4)

15 Everything's afloat, and evidently confused. (3,2,3)

16 Look hard at the girl that lost her woolies—but it's a nice place to look for anything. (6)

18 What people have a cage for, well put in Paris when certain people tie one on. (6)

20 More than just a gentle hint! (No, Cicero! It's wrong!) (8)

23 Perhaps dole out gold from here, hopefully. (4)

24 Do hers possibly make lots and lots of them? (6)

25 You seldom see this unless you get to its partner. (3)

28 It appears as though it should be loud, but its real stinky! (7)

29 Doesn't pay any attention to Italian ladies or gentlemen if the last came first. (7)

30 These could be confused with a sail, possibly. (5)

31 Taps a signal for it, and makes tracks! (6,3)

DOWN

1 and **15** A poser on what we breathe at certain levels—but they're really much smaller than 707s! (5,9)

2 Half the digits should have one—but you get to sort of lean about one, as well. (7)

3 What sinners might hope for may be labeled as a center for returning things. (10)

4 Truly its about a short part of the Bible, and not just marginally so. (8)

5 Any sort might get to eke out the final part, which might be a nickname for John Cheese of old. (6)

6 It's a lousy wand that breaks so often! (4)

7 Looks carefully at what might contain gold, but it proves to be an ugly sight. (7)

8 Turns over the office to someone, but they might lead upstairs as well. (5,4)

14 Inviolable, so cars can't get wrecked this way. (10)

15 See 1 down

17 Making scribbles like a dandy 5 down should be able to do. (8)

19 When people retire, I'd bet me a bundle this would make it! (7)

21 Derive by reason? Just the opposite? The hell you say! (7)

22 What a cow does with a measure of poet. (6)

26 In the beginning, it might be one of stone. (5)

27 A great lot, sometimes heavenly, and you might thank one for being invited. (4)

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F		D		N		E		X		E		E		I
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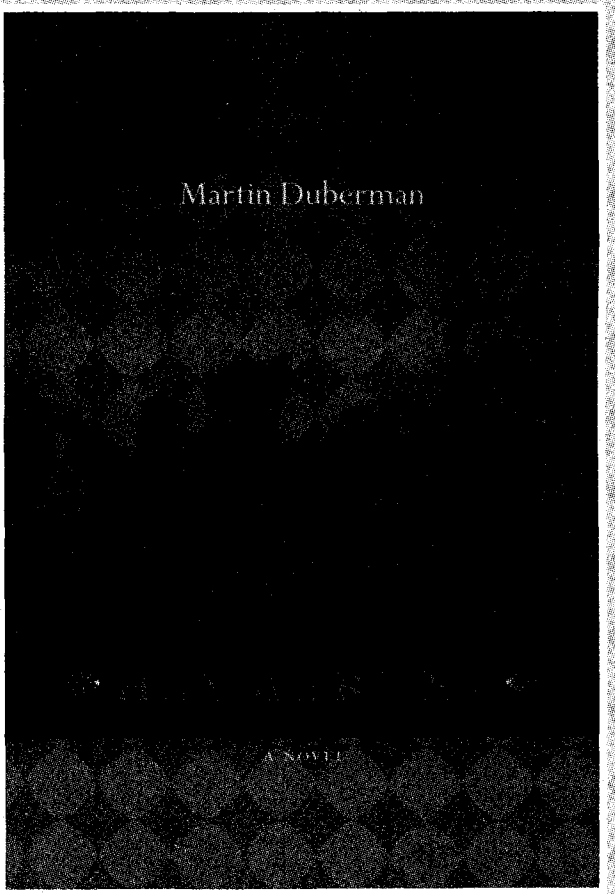

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